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VOL. III.

LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1856.

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THE YOUNG COMMANDER.

CHAPTER I.

Sixty years ago it was not possible to behold a more beautiful specimen of naval architecture than the "Surinam," she was universally allowed to be the handsomest East Indiaman on the waters; it required a critical eye to distinguish her from a vessel of war. The government offered a large sum for her, having some time before purchased nine East India ships, and armed them with twenty eight long eighteen pounders; one, of the nine the

"Glatton,"* under the command of Captain Trollope—a few months afterwards actually engaged and put to flight a whole squadron of French ships, one of which the "Brutus," was four hundred tons larger than the "Glatton."

The "Surinam," having to perform a long and dangerous voyage alone was strong handed, having one hundred and twenty seven men, independently of officers ; and had, besides passengers, a most valuable freight ; she carried twenty long eight pounders, and four cannonades carrying sixty eight pound balls.

It was strongly suspected that the revolutionary government of France had dispatched rear Admiral Sercey, with a noble fleet of ships to attack our Indian possessions, and capture the British and other East Indian ships. Therefore nothing was spared or neglected in fitting out the "Surinam."

On the 28th of October, 179—. This noble

* The "Glatton" had twenty-eight carronades of sixty-eight pounds on her lower deck besides.

ship left the Downs with a favourable breeze from the east, and under a press of sail ran down Channel and soon gained the broader waters of the Bay of Biscay.

The parting of our hero from his sister, Mary and Sir Charles Treastle; and, Fanny, from her kind and affectionate uncle, was as might be expected painful to all, still they parted with the full hope of again meeting in a few months.

There was a very pleasant party on board the Surinam; Colonel Denbigh, his lady, and two very charming girls, his daughters; Mrs. Salford, with her son and daughter, both grown up, the son going out as a cadet; a widow lady, with two young children; and three officers of the —— Regiment then at Calcutta, young men of good family, and gentlemanly appearance. The eldest of the three, Captain Herbert Fitzmaurice, was a young man of extremely lively and convivial disposition. Thus, with a noble ship, and a fine

crew, there was every prospect of a pleasant voyage.

Our hero's extreme youth at first astonished all the passengers, who wondered at so young a man being the commander of an Indiaman; but Claude Tregannon soon won all their confidence from his kind and unassuming manners, and the evident attention he paid to all the observations of the first mate, Mr. Burton, in working the ship, first to the Downs, and afterwards in sailing down channel; but before our hero had been a month on board the *Surinam*, he was fully competent, from his previous knowledge of navigation and the working of ships, to carry her, with very little instruction, to the end of her voyage.

Colonel Denbigh, a gentleman of high family, and exceedingly agreeable manners, about five and forty or fifty years of age, soon perceived that there was a motive in Claude Tregannon's going out as Commander of the "*Surinam*," for his conversation fully con-

vinced him that though Captain of the vessel he was not by profession a sailor, though evidently a skilful, thoughtful, and courageous seaman. Before the first month was over, the vessel encountered a tremendous gale, dead against her, with a furious and breaking sea. The tempest lasted for nearly seven days, during which Claude Tregannon, by his cool courage and judicious management, not only won golden opinions from all the passengers, especially the female portion of them, but elicited the rough but genuine admiration of the thorough old salt, Mr. Burton, his first mate. Nothing unusual occurred during the voyage; after the gale, pleasant weather followed, and the good ship, without straining a rope yarn, arrived within three days' sail of the mouth of the Ganges, when the breeze lulled and a dead calm followed.

Our young commander on going on deck, just as the sun rose above the mighty deep, observed to Mr. Burton—

“Is it not rather unusual, so dead a calm in these latitudes at this season?”

“Light and baffling winds do often occur here,” returned Mr. Burton; “but there’s a slight air coming up from the west, and by Jove, I think I see the topsails of a large ship rising in the same direction.”

Just then a man in the main-top sung out—

“A sail, ho —”

“I should not be surprised,” said our hero, “if it turns out to be one of Admiral Sercey’s squadron. The brig we spoke yesterday positively asserted that they were cruizing within two days’ sail of the mouth of the Ganges, and the Captain advised us to keep a sharp look out.”

“We shall make this fellow out in a very short time,” said Mr. Burton, taking his glass and going aloft.

Claude Tregannon stood watching the rising sails of the ship—for ship she was soon made out to be. In a few moments he was joined both

by Mr. Burton, and the second mate, Mr Seabright.

“I can make the vessel out to be a frigate or corvette,” said Mr. Burton; “and she brings up a fine breeze.”

“It’s well to be prepared,” said our hero, “should she turn out to be part of Sercey’s squadron. There is, you know, a corvette named the *Regénérée* in his squadron, and, as we were told, a remarkably fast sailer; this may be she,” and taking a memorandum book from his pocket, he ran over a few leaves. “Ah! look here, Mr. Burton, I took down the names that French barque gave us in return for the assistance we rendered them—corvette, *Regénérée*, twenty long twelve-pounders, a hundred and sixty-five men, seven hundred and fifteen tons, the fastest and handsomest ship in the squadron; the *Mutine*, brig corvette; there is also a thirty-six gun frigate called the *Regénérée*, forty-four gun frigate *Le Forte*, and

several others. So let us not be caught sleeping. If necessary, we can stand a shot or so with the corvette 'Regénérée.'

All hands were roused, and soon became actively engaged preparing for an enemy, should the advancing ship prove one.

The ship's courses were now visible, and as the sails of the Surinam began to fill with a fine breeze from the south west, she was put upon her course for the mouth of the Ganges. They were then, by their reckoning, having passed the Island of Ceylon, though they had not seen it, within fifteen leagues of the great Andaman Island.

Watching closely the movements of the stranger, they perceived that as they increased their sail, she did the same. Now they could distinctly make her out to be a remarkably beautiful corvette, and had no doubt whatever but that she was a French ship-of-war, from the cut of her sails, etc.

By this time the sun was high up, and the breeze steady; the preparations for action had roused the passengers. The first upon deck were Fanny Fleetwood and Madame D'Arblay; they had heard the rumour from their attendant Hannah, that there were some apprehensions that they were pursued by a French vessel, and Fanny's anxious heart beat somewhat faster as she thought of the probable consequences of an action with a ship of war—for though the "Surinam" carried guns and an able crew, an action with a full armed ship was rather alarming.

Claude was by her side in a moment; he saw she looked a little pale, and with a gay smile he said, pressing her little hand—

"So this alarm of a strange ship, Fanny, has deprived you of your usual slumbers, and banished some of the roses from your cheeks."

"Ah," said Fanny, casting a look at the advancing ship—a noble sight, for she was

covered from deck to truck with a cloud of canvass. "I always admired a ship under full sail, but I confess, at this moment, I would rather see the Pagodas of Calcutta. Are you sure that it is a French ship, and if it is ;" and she looked anxiously into his face, with her sweet loving eyes, "what will you do, dear Claude?"

As she spoke, a cloud of smoke burst from the bows of the strange ship, and then the loud boom of a cannon pealed over the deep.

"Ha !" exclaimed Fanny, "there is no doubt of it now."

And she looked up into her lover's face without evincing any sign of fear.

"Ah, *mon dieu !*" said Madame D'Arblay, with a shudder, "there will be a fight, I fear, for that ship sails faster than we do."

"We have a heavy cargo," said Claude, "or that would not be the case. He has, no doubt, hoisted his colours, but we cannot see them, the wind being direct aft. And now,

my love," whispered our hero, to Fanny, "you had better go below."

As he spoke Colonel Denbigh and Lieutenant Forester came on deck, and also the Colonel's two daughters, who at once joined Fanny.

"I hear we are chased by the tri-colour," said the Colonel, addressing our hero, "I see she will be soon within gun shot. She must be a deuced fast craft."

"In this light wind, Colonel, she has decidedly the advantage. Ha! I can make out her colours now, she has altered her position a little, and there you may see, with the glass, the banner of revolutionary France."

"By Jove, there it is, sure enough," said the Colonel, after a look through the glass, "this is awkward, but I suppose, Captain," he added, anxiously, "we must try our metal with our old enemies, for I plainly see we cannot outsail her."

“It is my duty,” said Claude Tregannon, “to avoid an encounter as long as I can, on account of both cargo and passengers, but if we cannot avoid it, and I feel satisfied, with this breeze, we cannot, we must show our foes that the British Ensign, even from the peak of an East Indiaman, is to be respected and dreaded. I am not at all alarmed for the result; we have a fine, high spirited crew, four heavy cannonades, that I think will astonish them, and we are twice their tonnage, so I beg you, Colonel, to take the ladies below, and re-assure them.” And turning to the Miss Denbighs, who, pale and frightened, had approached close to the speakers, he said, with a gay smile—“You must not be alarmed, dear ladies, if we make a little noise before dinner, more than usual, but I trust not sufficient to spoil your appetites.”

Another gun from the French corvette—the ball striking the water within a few yards of

the stern, and actually dashing the spray over the tafrail, sent the two Miss Denbighs, with a cry of alarm, into the cabin.

Fanny Fleetwood, so far from turning pale, or showing signs of fear, with a flush on her cheek, advanced, with a steady step, and holding out her hand to her lover, said—

“Of course we are useless lumber, and must get out of the way. God bless you, Claude,” she continued, in a firm, clear voice, “I know you will do your duty.”

With a look of devoted affection, he kissed her hand, and led her to the companion stairs, saying—

“Be of good heart, my beloved, with God’s help we shall beat this corvette off.”

All now became eager and excited on board the “Surinam;” to escape by sailing was out of the question, therefore Claude gladly followed the secret desire of his own heart, and that was to fight the stranger. In a moment the studding sails were all in—the courses

brailed and furled, and the "Surinam," brought up on the starboard tack, with the English Ensign floating out steadily and cheerfully in the breeze. The water was remarkably smooth, and the breeze quite sufficient to work the ship.

This sudden manœuvre of the "Surinam," seemed to startle the crew of the French corvette, and before they had time either to recover from their astonishment, or take in their cloud of canvass, the "Surinam" was kept away a point or two, and two of the long sixty-eight-pound cannonades brought to bear upon her, and fired. The unexpected discharge of such unusually heavy metal on board an East India ship, perfectly confounded the Frenchman, as they crashed through his rigging, and brought down his main top-mast, with the whole of its lumber of sails, top gallant mast, and rigging. Nevertheless, he fired a broadside into the "Surinam," as she went in stays, which did no damage, except cutting

away a couple of top-sail sheets, and badly wounding the mizen top-mast.

The "Surinam," now on her larboard tack, and the crew of the French corvette having partly cleared away her lumber, and brought the ship on a wind, returned the "Surinam's" fire, with her long eight-pounders, and thus for twenty minutes a rapid and sharp cannonade was exchanged. As yet only three men were hurt on board the Indiaman, when one of the heavy cannonades, pointed by Claude himself, who left the working of the ship in the hands of the experienced Mr. Burton, who handled her splendidly, brought down the fore top-mast of the corvette. A loud and hearty cheer—a British cheer—pealed over the deep—the next moment the four heavy guns having been brought on the one side, were discharged into the corvette, at a distance of scarcely three hundred yards, creating terrible havoc amongst the spars, and leaving her so completely

crippled that she lay motionless, and entirely at the mercy of the Surinam to rake her.

Just then the Surinam came close up, intending to cross her stern and give her a broadside, previous to which, Claude Tregannon, with a speaking trumpet in his hand, sprung upon the bulwarks, and hailing the ship, called to her to surrender, or he would rake her. This the Frenchman replied to by a volley of musketry, which, strange to say, passed by our hero, leaving him untouched, but wounding several of the men who were looking out over the side. The next moment the Surinam's broadside was poured in upon the encumbered deck of the corvette, with deadly effect, and the captain being killed by the last discharge, the tri-colour was hauled down, and the splendid corvette, the *Regénérée*, surrendered, after a short but sharp conflict of forty five minutes.

As the tri-colour fell, a loud cheer rose from

the Surinam's crew, and Colonel Denbigh, and all the officers on board, who remained on deck the whole time, heartily shook hands with their young commander, and the worthy Mr. Burton, complimenting them on the victory they had so gallantly gained. But Claude Tregannon saw only the sweet face of Fanny Fleetwood standing close to the companion stairs, leaning on the arm of Hannah, with her eyes fixed upon him, and the tears rolling down her cheeks. She had witnessed his act of hailing the corvette, had stood, though her heart beat wildly, as the Frenchman aimed a volley of musketry at her lover, some of the balls even piercing the boom above her head, and knocking splinters out of it, and even when the thunder of the Surinam's broadside shook the ship, still the devoted girl stood unmoved. Seeing—thinking—of nothing but him she idolized.

CHAPTER II.

ON the 24th of March, 17—, the Surinam, with her prize, the corvette, under jury masts, was sailing up the broad Ganges, with the City of Calcutta before her.

We do not intend to inflict on our readers any description of Indian people, or the buildings and curiosities of Calcutta. We have books of voyages and travels over every known and unknown land under the sun. Ladies and gentlemen traverse the globe for mere amusement ; in fact, a voyage round the world, by a

curious and adventurous lady, is quite a bagatelle, at the present day. Therefore, any of our readers feeling any curiosity concerning Calcutta and its motley and strange inhabitants, will find abundant materials for satisfying their curiosity in the literature of the day.

We shall merely say, that the "Surinam" and her prize came to an anchor in the usual ground for East-Indiamen, and that, in a few hours, all the passengers were landed, after taking a most warm and friendly leave of their handsome commander.

Fanny Fleetwood's deep anxiety about her father's health was relieved before the vessel came to an anchor. Ere she could sail up the one hundred miles of the noble though dirty yellow river into the Hooghley her arrival in the river was known in Calcutta, and a boat, with a gay awning, and a dozen rowers, belonging to Mr. Fleetwood, met them many miles before they reached their anchorage, and rejoiced Fanny's heart with the intelli-

gence that her father was very much better, though unable to leave his mansion to meet her.

Fanny and Madame D'Arblay therefore proceeded at once to her father's magnificent mansion; our hero promising to visit Mr. Fleetwood the following day. There were formalities to go through; and his prize, which excited considerable curiosity and admiration, had also to be visited by the authorities, and the officers and men disposed off.

It was most gratifying to his feelings to know that his reception by Mr. Fleetwood would be of a kind most reassuring—for scarcely had Fanny arrived at her father's residence, than a messenger was despatched with a letter, written by her, but dictated by Mr. Fleetwood himself. It was all the most sanguine lover could wish—Mr. Fleetwood insisting that as soon as he possibly could leave his ship he should take up his abode in his house—Fanny, in a postscript, adding—

that her father had been positively ordered by his physicians to return to Europe, as nothing but his native air could prolong his life. This was delightful intelligence.

Accordingly, the following day, having satisfied the authorities, and gone through some tedious forms respecting his prize, he was able to leave the rest of the duty to be performed by Mr. Burton and the second mate, and set out in a palanquin sent for him to visit Mr. Fleetwood, who resided on one side of the noble Chandrine road, which consists of splendid palaces on both sides. At sunset, this road becomes the resort of all the aristocracy of Calcutta, and, like the Prado of Madrid, or the Corso at Naples, the Lungo D'arno in Florence, is crowded by gay equipages, with stuck-up Baboos, a Rajah or two, followed by a multitude of attendants, and ladies and gentlemen, of European origin, mounted on beautiful horses.

Claude Tregannon would much rather have

walked than be cooped up in a palanquin, but quietly conforming to the custom of the country, he arrived at Mr. Fleetwood's mansion, somewhat astonished and amused at the strange sights he had witnessed on the way.

Mr. Fleetwood was at this period about sixty-three; he was much taller than his brother—somewhat pale, thin, and yellow—yet his features were very handsome, and his figure gave evidence that, though weak from long illness, he must, in his youth, have possessed considerable dignity and gracefulness. Claude was greatly pleased with his manner and bearing; while Mr. Fleetwood himself was forcibly attracted by the appearance of his child's preserver, and his simple prepossessing manners. A suite of chambers was prepared for him, attendants placed at his disposal, and Mr. Fleetwood himself, before the expiration of three weeks, placed his daughter's hand in that of the overjoyed young man, saying—

“The only wish of my heart was that I

might live to again behold my daughter, and that I might find the person upon whom she had bestowed her heart worthy of her. My wishes are fulfilled—I feel proud of her choice—you preserved her young life, and she has loved you ever since with an affection not to be surpassed. You have told me candidly how you are situated, and that in reality you have as yet no name to give my child. Even if such was really the case—but I know it is not so—so confident do I feel, from all I have heard, and now judge from what I have seen—for after fifty years intercourse with the world, I fancy I can read most human hearts—that I would bestow my child's hand upon you, assured that her happiness was secured by a union with one, I thank God, possesses a noble and virtuous mind; one who will cherish in his heart and soul the treasure I bestow upon him; I talk not of wealth, for I think I have read your heart, and the love of gold has no place there, but this I will say, should you

fail in establishing your claim, I will, if God spares me, at once make a will leaving you and my child all I possess on the condition of your taking my name; and though only a British Merchant, the name of Fleetwood may rank with the best in the land for honour and probity."

This noble and generous conduct of Mr. Fleetwood affected our hero exceedingly; his mind was relieved from all anxiety, and in the society of Fanny and her father time fled rapidly. But Mr. Fleetwood's physicians urged him to hasten his departure; and as all his affairs in the east had been previously settled, he himself was extremely anxious to return to Europe; the homeward bound ships would not be able to sail for more than two months, and the "Surinam" could not be ready sooner. It was therefore resolved to return to England in the corvette Claude Tregannon had captured—the information he had received concerning the corvette, was only partially correct—it did not belong

to Admiral Serecy's squadron, but had only sailed in company with them—she was a private corvette, and had two hundred men on board; was splendidly fitted out, and built expressly for speed, had taken several prizes, and had a very large amount of specie, she was therefore a valuable capture, and the crew of the "Surinam" would share a considerable sum. Mr. Fleetwood having purchased the corvette, she was re-masted and fully repaired, and selecting fifty men from the "Surinam," the vessel re-christened, and named "The Water Witch," was soon ready for sea, Mr. Seabright returning as first mate, while Mr. Burton remained to command the Indiaman, Thus in nine weeks after his arrival at Calcutta. Claude Tregannon sailed from thence, as commander of the "Water Witch," with a picked crew of fifty men, and carrying ten guns, long twelve pounders, instead of eight, with one of the heaviest pivot guns, yet mounted.

The "Water Witch" got under weigh with

a favourable breeze, and having cleared the Mouths of the Ganges, bore away for England, keeping close along the coast of Ceylon in order to avoid the French cruisers. Off the Island they were spoken to by an English Frigate, who thought she had a prize from the build of the corvette. From her they learned that Admiral Sercey's fleet, after a severe action with the *Arrogant* and *Victorious*, had sailed for the *Isle Du Roi* in the Archipelago of Margui, and that the English ships were gone to Madras, therefore all danger from Admiral Sercey's fleet was at an end. Claude Tregannon then steered direct for the Cape, where they arrived without adventure, all parties in high spirits. Mr. Fleetwood already much better, and Fanny as happy as her affectionate heart could wish.

Passionately fond of the sea, Claude delighted in the beautiful vessel he had taken and then commanded; her sailing, armed as she then was, was remarkable, and her qualities un-

deniable as a sea boat, having been well tried in some severe gales after loosing sight of Ceylon, and also in passing through the Mozambique Channel, where they had encountered tremendous squalls.

After ten days' pleasant delay at the Cape, the *Water Witch* again put to sea, with several homeward-bound merchantmen; but such was her speed, that long before night, not one sail was to be seen upon the vast expanse of water, through which the little vessel was ploughing her way, with a spanking breeze upon her quarter.

"How fortunate we are, dear Claude," said Fanny, some days after leaving the Cape, as she walked the deck leaning on her lover's arm, for the sea, excepting the tremendous long roll that always exists in those latitudes, was perfectly smooth. "Thank God, this voyage even seems to restore my kind father. He breathes freer, and his appetite is better."

"He is looking much brighter and better
c 3

everyway, dearest," said Claude, "and, no doubt, the bracing air of his native land will give him increased vigour."

"How long, with this wind, if it holds, Claude, will it take us to reach St. Helena, as my father wishes to stop a few days there. He benefitted wonderfully by the fortnight we spent at the Cape; it breaks the length of the voyage to him. As to me, I should make a capital sailor's wife, dear Claude—provided I was to be first mate," she added, with her sunny smile.

"I'm afraid, Fanny," replied her lover, "unless, as you say, you could be first mate of your husband's ship, he would be very apt to make few voyages. The breeze freshens, and if so, I dare say we shall be able to see Diana's Peak before sunset on Thursday."

It was not, however, till early on Saturday morning that the high peak of Diana, in the Island of St. Helena, was seen rising out of the wide waste of waters, like a spire. After a

week's repose in James's Town, which Mr. Fleetwood greatly enjoyed, they were again under weigh, and, without accident or adventure, arrived in the early part of October within sight of the Spanish coast.

Our hero then considered it best to keep well away for the coast of Ireland, in order to avoid meeting any of the French vessels of war cruising in the Bay of Biscay; but the wind blowing strong from the north-east, with a heavy sea, forced them in nearer the French coast than he wished, and rendered him rather anxious. For thirty-six hours they were obliged to lie to, and as the gale ceased, though still blowing strong, thick, hazy weather ensued.

"We must keep a very sharp look out," said our hero to Mr. Seabright. "We are in very awkward ground with this northerly wind and haze—two things that do not often come together."

"When they do, sir," said Mr. Seabright, shaking himself clear of a considerable amount

of moisture, "they usually precede some heavy gale from another quarter. I wish it would clear, for we may get rather too near to some of Jonny Crapaud's cruizers."

The next day the wind veered a little, and before night they could just lay their course, the weather still foggy and the sea troubled. Just an hour before sunset, with a shift of wind to the westward, the fog suddenly dispersed, and right in their course they beheld three large ships, not more than a league from them, standing towards the French coast, under single-reefed topsails.

The corvette was evidently perceived at the same moment by the strange ships, for the smallest vessel of the three immediately tacked, and then hoisted her topgallant sails over their reefed topsails. Thus she would be enabled to pass across their bows, if they stood in as they were then standing. Fanny and Madame D'Arblay had just left the deck to join Mr. Fleetwood at tea, and our hero resolved not to

alarm them, when, perhaps, after all, the strangers might be British vessels.

But Mr. Seabright having carefully examined them through his glass, pronounced them to be two large French frigates and a corvette.

“This is awkward, Mr. Seabright,” observed Claude; “we must keep away a little, and not let that craft pass within hail. They may mistake us easily enough for a French corvette, and we can show them the tri-colour; but should they hoist signals, we shall have to make a run—it will not do to show fight with two large frigates in sight.”

“The dusk will favour us, sir,” said Mr. Seabright, “and during the night we can easily get away from them. There is no moon, and the sky is overcast.”

The crew of the *Water Witch* were anxiously watching the corvette, which seemed to sail remarkably fast. Just then the two frigates tacked, and stood after the corvette.

The sun had set, and the breeze was unfortunately lulling. The French corvette was within a mile of them, and, without tacking, she could not get any nearer, for the *Water Witch* was gradually edging off the wind. The Frenchman evidently perceived this, for, firing a gun, she hoisted her colours.

“The tri-colour, as I said,” remarked Mr. Seabright, and one of the crew having the French flag ready, the next moment it flew out from the peak.

Immediately a signal was hoisted by the enemy, and though Claude Tregannon was quite ignorant of its meaning, another was hoisted in return, hoping that the increasing haze and faint light of the evening might mystify the enemy with respect to the flags. Everything was ready on board the *Water Witch* to set additional canvass, and make a run of it, for the two frigates sailed faster than the corvette. The Frenchmen evidently were

not satisfied with our hero's code of signals, for another gun, shotted, was fired, and then one of the frigates signalled the corvette.

"We must square away before the wind, sir," said Mr. Seabright; "it won't do; they are right in our course. If we run for about four hours, and then lower away everything, they will pass us in the night; it will be a very dark one."

In a moment the Water Witch was put before the wind, and covered over with every stitch of canvass she could carry.

Bang went one of the frigate's long eighteen-pounders which roused Fanny Fleetwood and the party below. Fanny was on deck in a moment.

"What is the firing for, Claude?" she most anxiously demanded; but before he could well reply, her quick eye rested on the three ships, though they were then seen but indistinctly in the fading twilight.

“You have caught me running away, Fanny,” said our hero, with a gay smile to hide his uneasiness; “you see we have got too close to some of the French cruizers during the fog.”

“I trust in God you will outsail them,” she anxiously exclaimed. “It would be dreadful to fall into the hands of the French—ah me! and we so near home.”

“You must not be desponding, my beloved,” replied Claude; “we are outsailing that vessel rapidly—in half-an-hour she will be out of sight—and during the night we will alter our course, and, please God, see old England after to-morrow.”

Fanny continued above with Madame D’Arblay, walking, and earnestly conversing with her lover till none of the French ships were visible from the deck, and then, somewhat reassured, descended to the cabin—no light was shewn on board the *Water Witch*;

but, unfortunately, the wind, about the beginning of the second watch, died away, and a stark calm ensued. It was intensely dark, and very overcast, with a heavy swell from the nor'-west quarter.

"This is very unfortunate," said Mr. Seabright; "for this last half-hour I have been fancying I can make out a light astern of us—if so, it must be the corvette—the wind holding on with her longer than it did with us."

Our hero looked astern, and, after a few moments, perceived the light, and, turning his night glass upon it, regarded it steadily.

"I greatly fear that is the corvette," he remarked, "making a night signal to one of the frigates. It does not advance, therefore she is now becalmed as well as ourselves. No doubt she will be within gun-shot of our pivot gun in the morning, and, if she is, we must try and cripple her before the frigate comes up; then, if the wind rises, which no doubt it

will with the sun, we will try our speed with the frigate."

"We can do that very well, sir," answered Mr. Seabright; "but if the calm continues, the frigates will send their boats, and it's not possible with our few hands to, successfully, resist them."

"It's scarcely possible it will last a calm like this with such a sky," said our young Commander; "and at this time of the year."

"Well, I should think not, sir," returned the old seaman; "but there's no knowing; had you not better turn in for a couple of hours, sir, it will give you fresh vigour."

"No," said Claude, "I feel no want of sleep; in fact, I am too anxious; you thorough seamen can sleep under all circumstances—I am only a young hand, and cannot command sleep; had I no one on board, and the consequences were only to be endured by ourselves,

I should think lightly of our situation—but captivity and its hardships would kill Mr. Fleetwood, and, perhaps, break his daughter's heart; such events would be worse than five thousand deaths to me."

"God forbid, sir, that such a catastrophe should occur," said Mr. Seabright, earnestly. "We are certainly in a ticklish situation; still many things may occur to get us out of it—a good breeze of wind for one. Perhaps we may see some of our British cruizers with the daylight—there must be some of them off the French coast on the look out."

With the very first break of dawn, the calm still continuing, all the crew of the *Water Witch* were on deck eagerly looking out, for the thought of a French prison had nothing very agreeable in it. There was a thin, grey haze, upon the surface of the ocean, but, above it, the tall spars and sails of the French corvette were plainly visible—she was within

range of the Water Witch's pivot carronade, though infinitely too heavy metal for such a ship as the Water Witch to carry for actual service.

Still our hero, having witnessed the terrible havoc, performed by the heavy guns in the Surinam, determined, before leaving Calcutta, to have one heavy gun fitted into the Water Witch as a pivot gun. He now resolved to make use of it in crippling the French corvette, before she could bring any of her guns to bear upon them. Mr. Seabright considered her to be an eighteen-gun corvette, fitted with twelve-pounders, if so, with her compliment of men, she was too weighty an antagonist to encounter at close quarters.

On the sun's rising, the fog lifted, and the sky began to wear a most threatening aspect—as yet not a breath of air was stirring—but they perceived that the corvette was creeping up, with her three boats a-head towing her—

and three miles astern was one of the frigates ; the other was nearly hull down.

The moment the corvette could bring her broadside to bear, she opened fire upon the *Water Witch*, evidently to try her range, but the balls fell very short.

“ Ah ! mounseer,” exclaimed one of the crew of the *Water Witch*, patting the breech of the swivel, “ you want to play bowls, do you ? well, here’s a dose for you that will spoil your bowling.”

The *Water Witch* was brought round with some difficulty, and the gun pointed, aim taken by Mr. Seabright, and the match applied. Our hero, having half-an-hour before gone below, and communicated to the ladies and Mr. Fleetwood, through Hannah, who was up and dressed, not to be alarmed, as he was going to try his heavy gun upon the French corvette. This intelligence roused them all up at once. The gun was no sooner fired than all hands

eagerly watched the effect. It was elevated so as to damage the spars of the corvette. The elevation, however, was not sufficient, or else the distance was greater than supposed, for the ball struck the water within a few yards of the boats towing, covering them with spray, and actually bounding from the water clear over them, striking the corvette in the bows, smashing and tearing away the starboard cat-heads, and doing considerable mischief. The astonishment of the Frenchman was great—in a moment they ceased towing, and got on board as fast as they could. Just then several cats' paws of wind fell upon the water—the nearest frigate got the breeze first, then the corvette; it was a fresh breeze, and she came bowling along with it, though not a breath, at that time, filled the sails of the *Water Witch*. Just at this instant the gun was again ready, and our hero took a steady aim at the corvette's masts. The next moment the

match was applied, and a loud cheer told the result. Down came the corvette's fore-top-mast with all its gear, and a few minutes afterwards the Water Witch was dashing away through the sparkling sea under a strong breeze at south-west.

Fanny, leaning on the arm of her father, was now on deck.

"I see, Claude," said Mr. Fleetwood, "you are learning to become a thorough seaman rapidly—you have spoiled that corvette's speed for some hours, at all events. If we do not find the frigate too fast for us, all will be well, some of those French vessels sail remarkably fast."

"At all events," remarked our hero, in a serious tone, "that one seems to go along very fast."

Fanny looked up into her lover's face, as she let her soft, fair hand rest on his.

"You have been up all night, dear Claude

Do come below and take some breakfast. Madame is waiting for us."

"Well, I will go and make a hasty meal, so as to be ready for anything; but as long as the wind holds, there is very little to fear,"

So saying, he and his anxious betrothed descended to the cabin.

CHAPTER III.

THE morning meal usually so cheerful was rapidly consumed, and almost in silence, though our young Commander, rousing himself, said all he could to reassure Fanny and Madame D'Arblay—Mr. Fleetwood also speaking cheerfully and hopefully. Having made a hasty breakfast, our hero again hurried on deck. It was blowing much stronger, and a heavy thunder-storm appeared to be brewing to the eastward, and coming up against the wind—altogether, as Mr. Seabright said—"there was

nothing very pleasant in the aspect of the weather, and the frigate was carrying on with a vengeance.

The corvette was still following, and, with his glass, our hero could perceive they were working with might and main, getting up a spare topmast.

“We must get our craft upon a wind, sir,” said Mr. Seabright, “or the frigate will overhaul us. She is a powerful ship, dead before the wind.”

“I have been thinking so these last few minutes,” answered Claude, “but, if we do, we shall have to pass within shot of the corvette, who you see has altered her course, and we cannot get on the other tack, for we should then be cut off by the sternmost frigate.”

“It’s not easy to out-manœuvre three such customers,” observed Mr. Seabright, going forward to watch for a favourable moment for reducing their canvass, and getting their vessel upon a wind.

This, in less than ten minutes, was effected and all was secure; they then felt the full force of the gale, which caused the Water Witch, under her topsails and courses to heel over, so as nearly to bury her guns in the sea. They watched the frigate anxiously, the next moment she shot majestically into the wind, reducing her enormous mass of canvass like magic; and taking in her topgallant-sails, lowered the masts at the same time.

“By Jove,” exclaimed our hero, “she’s strong handed, and skilfully worked; now comes the critical moment, for we shall pass within less than musket shot of the corvette, though there is not much to apprehend from her guns in this tumble of a sea.”

On a wind, the Water Witch was a most splendid sailer; she was evidently leaving the frigate, who did not—although a very fast craft—appear to carry her canvass steadily. Being prepared to exchange broadsides with the corvette, *en passant*, all hands stood anxi-

ously watching the moment they came within range. Just then a tremendous peal of thunder roared over the deep, the next instant the gale lulled and another peal that seemed like the crash of a thousand pieces of artillery burst over their heads, and like magic the gale suddenly ceased, not even a breath of air remained, leaving the Water Witch rolling heavily in the trough of the sea. In the pause between the stunning peals of thunder, and the vivid flashes of lightning, almost blinding them, the French corvette, then within range, opened fire upon the Water Witch, though she rolled terribly herself. The ladies were utterly confounded by the terrific violence of the storm, but Claude Tregannon was neither dispirited or deprived of his presence of mind; naturally quick, and energetic, the greater the danger he felt himself involved in the more his spirit and determination increased. Though not expecting to do much mischief in the then agitated state of the sea, he, nevertheless,

poured a broadside into the corvette, after hoisting the flag of Old England ; but heaven's artillery soon silenced the feeble imitation of man, and so terrible became the increasing lightning, and so repeated and awful the crashes of thunder, that both crews paused and looked around with some degree of awe. In a few minutes Mr. Seabright's voice was heard calling with a loud voice "furl top-sails and brail the main-sail, for here comes the squall." It struck the French corvette first, sheets and tacks were let fly in a moment, and away flew the sails, split into ribbons. On came the corvette buried in a mass of foaming water ; the crew of the Water Witch had just time to furl their main-sail when the squall reached them ; unfortunately her position was not so favourable for receiving the force of the tempest ; as the hurricane came from eastward, she heeled over with the fury of the blast, her top-sails split, and before she could recover the shock and be made to answer the helm,

the French ship ran right into them with a tremendous crash.

A scene of awful confusion ensued ; even amidst the horrors of the storm, a furious, though short, hand to hand, conflict took place ; locked together, their bulwarks shattered, both their top-masts broke off at the caps, the French crew more than one hundred in number leaped, cutlass and pistol in hand, on board the doomed *Water Witch*. Though only fifty in all, the crew and their young captain, fought with a gallantry and desperation that staggered the Frenchmen. The second lieutenant of the corvette, with a savage oath, urged on his crew, and leaping on board himself, discharged his pistol at Claude Tregannon. He missed his aim, and his intended victim ran him through with his cutlass. Still numbers poured in on them ; sometimes the tremendous crashing of the two entangled vessels, throwing the combatants off their legs, while the shouts, curses, and cries of the enraged

Frenchmen were drowned and smothered by the continual peals of thunder bursting over them. Forced by numbers, to retreat, our hero still fought inch by inch, till the first lieutenant of the corvette throwing himself on board with a fresh body of men forced the crew of the *Water Witch* down below.

Overpowered by the pressure of the enemy, Claude was driven down the companion stairs; as he descended he felt the arm of the anxious Fanny thrown round his neck, as if to shield him from a shower of blows aimed at him, by his enraged and furious assailants.

“Merciful heavens, Claude,” she exclaimed, trembling with the excitement she felt, “you are bleeding.”

“It is nothing, my beloved,” exclaimed our hero, in a voice of intense bitterness, “but that squall has lost us the ship.”

Madame D’Arblay though fearfully alarmed, said—

“They will not injure me. I shall be set free, and I will say Fanny is my daughter.”

“Ha !” exclaimed Mr. Fleetwood, “that is a good notion. Hush, here they come; beware, my child, show no interest in me, God will shield us yet.”

As he spoke, an officer, followed by several armed sailors descended the cabin stairs and entered the saloon. He was a tall, handsome man, about seven or eight and twenty; he halted when he perceived the ladies, and politely removed his hat, saying, as he looked, with some surprise at Claude Tregannon, who stood leaning on his sword by the side of Mr. Fleetwood—

“You, I presume, monsieur, are the commander of this vessel, which I find is not a ship of war.”

“Such is the case, monsieur,” returned our hero, “that sudden hurricane placed us in your power.” As he spoke, he handed his

sword to the Frenchman, who bowed, and turning to his men, desired them to leave the cabin. "I trust," continued Claude, "that these ladies, who are your countrywomen, will be kindly treated."

The lieutenant looked surprized, but at once replied—

"If they were not French, sir, their sex would secure their instant protection, but as countrywomen, they will be set free. May I request, madame, your name. Strange to say, your features are familiar to me, though years must have passed since I beheld them?"

"Ernestine D'Arblay, monsieur," answered the surprised madame.

"What!" exclaimed the Frenchman, with a start of astonishment. "The Countess D'Arblay, wife of Jean Philibert D'Arblay?"

Before she could reply, a loud voice from above hailed the lieutenant, saying—

"A signal, sir, from the frigate—three

large ships, British men-of-war, coming up from the eastward."

"Ha," cried the Frenchman, with a start, and turning to Claude Tregannon and Mr. Fleetwood. "These ladies will receive every attention. Will you, gentlemen, please to follow me."

Remonstrance was useless, neither did our hero or Mr. Fleetwood like to betray any great emotion, but poor Fanny burst into a flood of tears, as she held out her hands, one to her father, the other to her lover. The Frenchman hastened on deck; clasping his beloved in his arms, and pressing a kiss upon her lips, Claude bounded up the stairs, slowly followed by Mr. Fleetwood.

Claude Tregannon not seeing any of his own crew upon the deck, stood anxiously waiting till the lieutenant gave his orders. He perceived that the *Water Witch* and the French corvette were hove to, within a couple of

hundred yards of each other. The thunder still roared in the distance—the terrific fury of the squall had ceased, and a strong east wind prevailed. Within three miles were the two French frigates under close reefed topsails, and at about double that distance could be distinguished two large ships standing towards them, under topsails alone, close reefed.

“I am ordered,” said the officer, who had charge of the *Water Witch*, “to send all the prisoners on board the corvette, and to make sail with this vessel, which I find is private property. Allow me to say, sir, it astonishes me that you so gallantly attempted to defend yourself with such a force surrounding you. I am happy to tell you, however, that except a few severe cutlass and pistol wounds, your men are comparatively well off. Your second shot killed four of our men. By the fall of the topmast we lost two others, and several were severely wounded in boarding you, which, I am sorry to say, has greatly enraged our

Captain. Pardon me if I give you a little advice, for somehow, you have interested me much. I tell you, in confidence, I am nephew to the Countess D'Arblay, and I know that the beautiful girl below cannot be her daughter. Nay, monsieur, you need not be alarmed, I will not betray her. I can guess her motive for passing off this young lady as her daughter, and depend on it it will answer. Her husband is a person of consequence, at this moment—he has been many years in prison. Pardon me, I can say no more now.”

As he concluded, a gun was fired from the corvette, and signals hoisted. Our hero was surprised and perplexed at the Frenchman's communication; he was perfectly aware that to any one previously acquainted with Madame D'Arblay, it would be impossible to pass off Fanny as her daughter, as it was not more than fourteen years since she had left France, and had then no children.

In a few moments four boats came from the

corvette, and two were launched from the Water Witch; the crew of the latter were brought up from below, and the wounded were to stay on board. Claude spoke to his men kindly and cheeringly, telling them to keep up their spirits, as they would soon be exchanged, and he trusted they would receive good treatment.

They all seemed delighted to see him, and that he was unhurt, and told him not to be uneasy about them—that they had given the monsieurs a pretty good dose considering, and had it not happened that they were taken aback by the thunder squall they should have escaped, or even had their crew mustered thirty more men, they would never have taken the Water Witch by boarding. In half an hour they were all on board the corvette, only thirty French sailors being left to take the Water Witch into Rochefort harbour, one of the finest in France.

Our hero and Mr. Fleetwood were the last to leave the *Water Witch*, and through the kindness of Lieutenant Laland some portion of their private effects was taken with them, and a brief, very brief parting was allowed, leaving Fanny distracted about her father and lover, whilst madame was bewildered and amazed on hearing that her husband was not only alive, but one of the leaders of the revolutionary army. She continued to whisper to Claude—

“Be of good heart, Lieutenant Laland is my nephew, and will aid you, if he can ; at heart he is a royalist.”

And thus our hero separated from his devoted and distracted betrothed. Mr. Fleetwood, whose health seemed wonderfully restored, bore his misfortune with great resignation ; in fact, till Claude’s naturally buoyant disposition rose superior to difficulty, he was the consoler. On reaching the deck of the corvette, Captain Charpentier, a fierce, vulgar looking man, evidently sprung from the lower orders, advanced

to where our hero and Mr. Fleetwood stood, after ascending the side of the corvette.

"Which of you two," he said, sharply, gazing from one to the other with a rude, fierce look, "commanded that craft yonder? I've been told it was you," he added, fixing his gaze penetratingly on our hero, "though I can scarcely believe that a beardless youth would have had the fool hardiness to fire upon the flag of regenerated France."

With a flushed cheek and a look of scorn, Claude Tregannon, forgetting the caution given him by Lieutenant Laland, replied—

"If I am to judge of regenerated France from the specimen before me, she must blush for her regeneration."

Our hero spoke French well, and his tone of utter contempt drove the French commander furious. He stamped upon the deck, uttering a volley of oaths, and calling a guard of marines aft, savagely ordered them to take the '*sacre*' Englishman and handcuff him.

Mr. Fleetwood, greatly excited, was about to remonstrate, but Claude Tregannon, placing his hand on his arm, said, entreatingly—

“For God’s sake, my dear sir, let the brute alone; I care very little for his petty revenge.”

Before he could utter a word more, the loud roar of cannon pealed over the deep. It was the foremost English frigate, the “Unicorn,” opening fire upon the French frigate, the Tribune.

The commander of the corvette turned round with an oath, and the marines surrounding Mr. Fleetwood and our hero, begged them civilly to go below, their officer saying, kindly—

“You shall be treated well, messieurs.”

It was very evident that the commander of the “Legère” did not much admire the arrival of the two English frigates on the scene of action; for he at once signalized his prize and made sail for the coast of France. We shall merely mention that the two French ships struck to the English frigates, and that the

“Legère,” instead of helping her consorts, made sail for the port of Rochefort.

Lieutenant Laland remained in command of the *Water Witch*, and having repaired damages, as well as it was possible in the time, in obedience to orders, though with a feeling of great disgust, bore up after the corvette, leaving the four ships in action. Descending to the cabin, he found his aunt and Miss Fleetwood in a state of great affliction; poor Fanny thought not of herself, but her father's and lover's captivity was a severe blow to her affectionate heart. Lieutenant Laland tried all in his power to diminish the uneasiness of the beautiful girl he was to style cousin. He had seen, at a glance—for Frenchmen are quick of perception in affairs of the heart—that the handsome commander of the *Water Witch*, and his aunt's lovely companion, were lovers, and perhaps it was well he did make the discovery; for it was impossible to behold and converse with Fanny

Fleetwood for any length of time without being interested and fascinated.

“And now, my dear aunt,” said the Lieutenant, sitting down, “I will, as you must be anxious, give you a very brief account of my uncle’s career after his return from India. You are already aware that he was, unfortunately, engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow the government of Louis. He and the other conspirators were, however, premature. A decree of the junior ministers, sanctioned by the King, deprived him of his title and estates; but, warned in time, he returned to Poitou, and collecting as much money as he could, contrived, as you know, to embark for India. After your flight, my mother, who was greatly affected at the misfortunes of her brother, set out for Paris to join my father. Years rolled on, and the revolution broke out. My poor father and mother! alas, those are terrible scenes to revert to, perished with many thousands of innocent victims, without even an

hour's warning. I was then serving in a King's ship, and knew not of their fate for two years. The tri-colour replaced the ancient banner of France, and army and navy embraced the new order of things.

It was about three or four years after Monsieur D'Arblay's return from India that our ship returned to Brest, and I proceeded to Paris. Need I express to you my anguish and despair when I heard the fate of my parents from Monsieur D'Arblay, whom by chance I encountered. From his youth, notwithstanding his ancient descent and rank, he had been a rank revolutionist. Strange that a man of his birth and position should imbibe such principles. Paris was convulsed by various factions. One day elevating a party, the next marching its leaders to the guillotine. I detested the revolutionists of all parties, and struck with horror at the scenes I witnessed rejoined my ship, glad, by the bustle and anxiety of a sailor's life, to escape from the bitter re-

collections of the past; thus I heard nothing more of my uncle for three years, and then only learned accidentally that the party he supported was crushed—many of the members executed, and others lingering out life in prison.

In the month of June 179—— our ship was refitting at Rochefort, and anxious to make some enquiries after my uncle, in fact, the only relation I possessed in France, I again visited Paris.

I arrived at a very terrible and eventful period; the Girondists were assembled for the last time, and with them perished all that remained of the virtuous and true in France; to my great joy and surprise I encountered my uncle, just set at liberty after a long incarceration. He was furiously opposed to the Girondists, whose fall has I fear opened a reign of terror far more to be dreaded, than that which is past; to my extreme regret and disgust I found that Monsieur D'Arblay was associated

with Marat, Robespierre and others equally notorious for their terrible, unscrupulous policy. You are aware that before his marriage he had served with distinction in the army ; he was now requested to take the colonelcy of a regiment of dragoons, under the command of General Queteneau, who was proceeding with a large force to crush the present insurrection in La Vendée.

At this very moment he and General Queteneau are actively engaged against those brave and gallant men. Before this I had returned to Rochefort having been first lieutenant to the Legère ; our commander I am sorry to say is a tyrant, a low, vulgar brute, and at heart a coward. This, my dear aunt, is a brief recital of events unknown to you, but sufficient to show you how to proceed when we reach Rochefort."

Madame D'Arblay listened to her nephew's short account of her husband's career with a melancholy interest ; her union with the Count

D'Arblay was not one of the heart, she married him to please her father.

An amiable and strictly virtuous woman, Madame D'Arblay, after her marriage, endeavoured all in her power to love and esteem her husband, but in a very short time found it quite impossible to do either. The district in which the property of the Count was situated, was less affected by the silent and imperceptible changes of time probably than any other in the empire of France. To a certain extent the feudal system existed, therefore the revolutionary principles of the Count D'Arblay found no response in the inhabitants of his district; why he, a man of rank and birth, should entertain such principles and ideas, was only to be accounted for by those who knew him.

The estates of his family had been at one time considerable, but he himself possessed but a moderate fortune. The estates adjoining had belonged to his grandfather, but for some cause or other, suspected treason it was said,

they became forfeited to the crown, and a few years after were bestowed by Louis the sixteenth upon the Marquis De Langbrie; the Count D'Arblay earnestly, if not fiercely, demanded justice of the king, offering to show proof that his grandfather was wrongfully accused, but Louis was not to be dictated to, and the Count received notice to avoid his majesty's presence. This rankled in the heart of Philibert D'Arblay, and was one of the causes of his hatred to all the royal family.

Madame D'Arblay in speaking of her early life to her pupil, whom she loved with all the fondness of a parent, had simply styled herself Madame D'Arblay; she never spoke of her former rank in society, and indeed never expected to either hear more of her husband, or again to set foot on her native soil. The intelligence therefore communicated to her by her nephew, caused her much emotion and much thought. Though her affection for her husband was only a feeling of moral duty; she

considered the tie one too sacred to be thought lightly of; that he had neglected her, she felt was too true; but that was no rule for her to be guided by, she therefore made up her mind, the moment they reached port, to write or send messengers to him announcing her arrival in France, and her wish to rejoin him. By doing so she also hoped through his means or influence to obtain the liberty of Mr. Fleetwood and Claude Tregannon, or at least be able to get them released at the first exchange of prisoners between the two countries; as to her beloved pupil, she fully expected to be able to restore her to her country and friends with little difficulty. All these thoughts and wishes she communicated to Fanny, who suffered exceedingly in mind; her only thought was the misery her father and lover must endure in a French Prison, and the weary length of time that might elapse before they could possibly be released.

In the mean time the captured "Water

Witch" followed the corvette, and favoured by a steady breeze, made the Island of Oleron, where they anchored for a night, whence the corvette made for Roehill, while the "Water Witch" was ordered to Rochefort.

Leutenant Laland, while the two vessels remained at anchor under the Island of Oleron, communicated to Captain Charpentier, that the ladies captured in the "Water Witch," were French, and no less than the wife and daughter of Colonel D'Arblay, who commanded a regiment under General Queteneau, and who were returning from India, having embarked in the "Water Witch," intending to reach France after landing in England; they therefore requested permission to land at Rochefort.

"Very well," observed the commander, "let them be taken before the authorities, when you arrive; they will settle the matter as they think fit. The prisoners will be sent on to Doué."

Accordingly Madame D'Arblay and her sup-

posed daughter were landed, with their effects, and Lieutenant Laland managed so well, that he had them comfortably established in the best hotel in the place, without any examination of even their luggage—the name of D'Arblay being sufficient to satisfy the authorities; for it was well known in Rochefort, that Colonel D'Arblay was advancing with his regiment to strengthen the garrison of that town, and the people were in terrible dread of the revolutionary army.

CHAPTER IV.

FIVE or six days after their arrival at Rochefort, Madame D'Arblay and her charge, somewhat paler than usual, but more resigned in mind, were sitting in the saloon of the hotel. The windows were open and they were gazing out over the broad waters of the noble harbour of Rochefort, and its forest of masts. Several vessels of war were in the outer harbour, and from the peak of all waved the "tri-coloured flag of revolutionary France." Madame sighed

as she looked on this emblem of dethroned royalty ; for like many, even then in France, she loved the ancient order of things. A messenger with letters had been sent to her husband, who was then at L—— with his regiment, and she waited for an answer with trembling impatience.

Lieutenant Laland had left to return to his ship, which was ordered to Brest to join a fleet fitting out there ; but he promised his aunt to make enquiries how the prisoners were treated, and let them know full particulars before he sailed from Rochelle.

As Madame and Fanny sat listlessly gazing from the window, the waiter entered with a letter in his hand.

“The messenger is just returned, Madame,” he said, “and has brought back this letter.”

With a palpitating heart, and a hand somewhat tremulous, Madame D'Arblay took the letter, and as the waiter retired, anxiously broke the seal, and read its contents. Fanny,

with a very serious expression of countenance, watching the varying changes of her features.

The letter of Colonel D'Arblay was as follows:—

“MY DEAR ERNESTINE,

“ I need not say how amazingly astonished I was on receiving your letter. As I shall see you in a few days, all explanations in writing are quite unnecessary—I will merely tell you how to act. I have been reinstated in my property of Chateau Bois-Philibert, and have every reason to believe, after the destruction and defeat of these rebellious Vendéans, I shall be put in possession of the estate of the late Marquis De L——, whose son is even now in the ranks of the Vendéans.

“ On receipt of this, you had better at once set out for Chateau Bois-Philibert, with your daughter—(these words were marked.) I need

not tell you to be cautious, as we halt for some days at D——.

“I shall be able to see you at the Chateau, and shall have time to explain all that may now appear strange to you.

“Believe me,

“My dear Ernestine,

“Ever your most affectionate husband,

“JEAN-PHILIBERT D'ARBLAY.”

Madame D'Arblay glanced through the epistle first to herself, and then read it to Fanny. When she had concluded, she said, with a faint smile—

“There is nothing very loving in this, my dear girl, but still I trust he will, when we meet, exert himself to procure the exchange of those we love; and also be able to plan some method of restoring you to your native land.

Bitter as the pang of parting with you will be, still it must take place."

Fanny threw her arms round the kind-hearted Frenchwoman's neck, and kissed her fondly, saying—

"Yes, it will be a bitter parting, from one whom I have always loved as a mother; but, dear Ernestine, I will not leave France till my beloved father and Claude obtain their liberty."

"Well, dearest, we will do our best; in the mean time we must set out for the Chateau. It is scarcely two days' short journey from this place, and is a very lovely spot. Ah, what recollections will it not recall!—I wonder we have not received a letter from my nephew. We go through Rochelle—perhaps we may see or hear of him there."

The next day, Madame D'Arblay, having hired a lumbering old French chariot to carry them to Rochelle, and procured passports for herself and daughter and one attendant, the

faithful Hannah, who still followed their fortunes, set out for the Chateau Bois Philibert. Though only eighteen or twenty miles, owing to the bad state of the roads at that period, they did not reach Rochelle till late in the day, and heard, to their great disappointment, that the corvette, Legere, had sailed some days before at a moment's notice. On cautiously making enquiries as to what had become of the English prisoners taken by the corvette, they learned that they had been sent, under a strong guard, to the Castle of Doué. The inhabitants of Rochelle, it was well known, were inclined to favour the cause of the Vendéans, and open communications with England.

"The prison of Doué," said Madame D'Arblay, "is within five leagues of the Chateau Bois-Philibert and General Queteneau is advancing, they say, upon Thouars; the whole country will be in a state of insurrection."

Leaving Rochelle early the next day, they hoped to reach the Chateau that night; but,

on stopping to refresh their horses, they heard that there was a band of Vendéans lying between them and Chateau Bois-Philibert—that a battle had been fought the day before, and three hundred republicans had been slain.

This intelligence startled the travellers, for such frightful excesses were committed on both sides, that it made them tremble to think they might encounter either of the contending parties.

Towards evening, a party of peasants coming to the auberge to drink, brought the news that the Vendéans were led by Henri De La Rochejaquelein.

“Ah,” said Madame D’Arblay, “I know that young man well, though he may not remember me; he is a most enthusiastic royalist, and a great admirer and friend to the English. I would not wonder, should I meet him, but I could persuade him to attack the prisons of Doue and release the English prisoners. The

Vendeans, they say, expect aid from England."

Fanny's cheek flushed when she heard this intelligence, but remarked—

"When he knows that Monsieur D'Arblay is marching at the head of a regiment to crush the insurrection, may he not think it a good ruse to secure the wife of one of the revolutionary leaders?"

"Oh, no, I know enough of Henri de Rochejaquelein to satisfy me he is far too chivalrous to injure or molest females, whether the wives or daughters of his bitterest enemies. Of course my communication to him, if I can manage an interview, must be secret. I will appoint him to meet us at Saint Morent," said Madame D'Arblay, "a little village five leagues from Chateau Bois-Philibert—there is a very good auberge there where we can pass the night, and thus reach the Chateau early to-morrow."

It was a remarkably beautiful evening as

the old chariot containing our travellers entered the valley of Saint Morent, through which ran a broad muddy stream ; the road was extremely bad, and the bridge across the river had been destroyed the day before by the party of Vendéans, so that the driver of the vehicle, compelled to stop his horses, began rubbing his huge ears, in a state of perplexity, how to cross the river.

While he thus stood, and our fair travellers were gazing out from the open window, they perceived two horsemen galloping out from the thick wood on the opposite side of the stream, who, the moment they perceived the carriage, turned their horses' heads towards the river, and rode rapidly into the stream, which, to the postillion's surprise, after all, was fordable in that particular spot. The foremost horseman wore a species of military dress, with high horseman's boots, whilst pistol holsters, and a heavy dragoon sabre hung from the belt round his waste. He was a tall, hand-some

youth—in years, perhaps, two or three and twenty.

At a glance, Madame D'Arblay recognised Henri De La Rochejaquelein. This noble and heroic youth, whose career was so brilliant and so brief, rode up to the side of the carriage, and, raising his hat from his head, said—

“Madame D'Arblay, no doubt.”

“Yes, Monsieur Henri—I knew you at a glance. I am so rejoiced to meet you,” she added, holding out her hand. “And your fighting in the cause of royalty adds to the feeling of pleasure I enjoy in seeing the son of my old and dear friend the Marquis De La Rochejaquelein.”

“Alas! my dear madame,” observed the young soldier, kissing the hand held out to him, “France is no longer the France of my early remembrance and of yours—a kind of dream comes over me, as I look upon you—a dream of the past—I fear I shall never live to see the like realised again. But do not let me

keep you here. When I received your note I recollected that we had destroyed the bridge over this stream, and I rode to meet you, and conduct you across this secret ford. I will ride through first; and now, postillion, keep close after me, and hold your horses well up."

They passed through the ford easily and safely, guided by Monsieur De La Rochejaquelein, who then continued by the side of the carriage, conversing upon the state of affairs in La Vendee, and other parts of the country where the insurrection was making rapid progress.

"I can pass half-an-hour this evening with you, my dear madame," said the young soldier; "but I must first ride on to Saint Luce; I shall be at Saint Morent nearly as soon as you will in that heavy carriage, and over such bad roads; and then we will talk over the affair you have at heart."

And shaking hands with madame, with a

low salutation, and a look of respectful admiration at Miss Fleetwood, Henri De La Rochejaquelein rode on with his attendant.

In an hour or two the ladies drew up at the door of the auberge, the "Demi Lune," in Saint Morent. It was a small, retired little hamlet, and the auberge stood apart from the village, in the midst of a very pretty garden. The landlady, Dame Marguerite, with her two pretty daughters, did all they could to make the travellers comfortable; the men of the village were away, some with Monsieur De La Roche Jaquelein, others with a celebrated leader of the Vendéans, named Charette.

The whole country between Nantes and Rochelle, a space of nearly a hundred miles, at that time was only to be traversed along cross roads leading to hamlets and villages, the land parcelled into a multitude of small farms, and tenanted by single families. Great simplicity of manners existed—the peasants followed their chiefs to the chase, and shared

their triumphs and successes. Their priests were revered by the simple minded people, and were truly worthy of their love; they were never burdened with riches, consequently were never exposed to the invidious malevolence great wealth always provokes. All the inhabitants of the hamlets and villages Madame D'Arblay had passed through from Rochelle to Chateau Bois-Philibert, sent forth their male population to fight under the different chiefs selected to head the insurrection in the Bocceage, the Marais, and Le Vendee. Forcing the peasants to take arms drove them furious, and they, therefore, resolved, as they must fight, they would combat against those who oppressed them.

Madame D'Arblay, when Monsieur de La Rochejaquelein joined them an hour afterwards at the auberge of the Demi Lune—felt no hesitation in giving him a brief history of herself, how she was situated with respect to Fanny, and her great desire that Mr. Fleet-

wood and Claude Tregannon might be released from the prison of Doué.

La Rochejaquelein was greatly interested, and gallantly declared that he would not rest till he had not only liberated the prisoners, but conducted them safely to the nearest seaport where the Vendean arms were triumphant, and enable them to embark for England. In the enthusiasm of the moment, her heart beating with the rapturous thoughts of her father's and lover's freedom, Fanny, with the tears of joy and gratitude in her beautiful eyes, caught the young man's hand in hers, saying —

“She would never, never forget his generous and noble gallantry; that she trusted God would bless his efforts in fighting for the liberties of his countrymen, and that she would pray with heart and soul for their success.”

Dropping on one knee, the chivalrous Henri kissed the fair and beautiful hand he held, saying—

“ Believe me, fair damoiselle, that next to my king and country, your father and lover shall be my dearest care. I will free them, and with God’s blessing, restore them to their country, and to you. Farewell—you shall soon here of Henri De La Rochejaquelein.

CHAPTER V.

THE Chateau Bois-Philibert had, like all French mansions of the preceding century—innumerable chimneys—innumerable doors, and curious pinnacles, with long, formal avenues, bordered with trees, planted at exact distances—statues on pedestals, fountains, and garden terraces, and small ponds full of fish. Still, from the nature of the country and situation, the Chateau was a pleasant residence; the hills in the immediate vicinity were lofty and irregular, and well covered with fine timber; the

stream of the Gueret ran within a few perches of the domain, and in one place formed a very pretty lake of nearly four miles in circumference.

The Chateau was in excellent repair, and evidently newly furnished; Madame D'Arblay perceived several servants, male and female, were ready to receive her; but they were strangers to her, and came from Paris. That which pleased madame most was the kind and affectionate greeting she received from numbers of the inhabitants of the little hamlet of Bois-Philibert, who remembered her well, and her kindnesses also.

The appearance of the beautiful Miss Fleetwood, who passed for madame's daughter, puzzled the villagers, that is the old ones, exceedingly. After a few days they shook their heads, and began to express their wonder to each other, saying—

“Surely, surely this beautiful girl is more than fourteen years old, or fifteen either, and I

remember well the time our good lady was married."

However, they were a simple, kind-hearted people, and all their observations ended in—

"It's no business of ours—she is a kind, good lady, and we rejoice she is come back;" but no one said they were glad that Monsieur D'Arblay was restored to his estate.

Madame and Fanny settled themselves in the old Chateau, each day anticipating hearing some tidings of Henri de la Rochejaquelein's proceedings, and Madame D'Arblay expecting a visit from her husband, with a nervous kind of feeling pervading her mind. Several reports reached the Chateau of the acts of General Queteneau and Colonel D'Arblay. The latter, with his regiment of cavalry, had attacked and defeated a large body of the insurgents, and gave no quarter, shooting all their prisoners in cold blood. General Queteneau was now within three leagues of Bois-Philibert, with a force of nearly eight thousand men, and

Colonel D'Arblay was near Doué with his regiment.

This intelligence made Fanny feel extremely miserable; somehow she experienced an unpleasant feeling at the mention of Colonel D'Arblay, that she could not account for, nor was it pleasant to know that there was so large a force in the very vicinity of the prison where her father and lover were confined. Every day, nay every hour brought in some intelligence to the little hamlet of Bois Pailibert.

It soon became known that the Vendean leader Charette was at the head of nearly twenty thousand men, and had seized upon the Isle of Noirmontiers, that there he might establish his head quarters, and open a communication with England. This intelligence rejoiced Fanny, for if Henri De La Rochejaquelein could break open the strong prison forts of Doué, and release the prisoners they would easily find safety in the Isle of Noirmont-

tiers. Late one evening a peasant, in soiled and torn attire, greatly flushed and excited, rode up to the Chateau gates, and throwing a letter to the porteress, said—

“For madame! give it to her immediately,” and springing on his horse rode rapidly away.

Two hours after a party of cavalry, with two officers at their head, arrived heated, and covered with dust, one of the officers was Colonel D'Arblay. The letter left for madame had been perused, it contained but three lines hastily written, and on the paper were stains of blood.

It would be scarcely possible to describe the joy and rapture of Fanny, when madame read to her as follows :—

“DEAR MADAME,

“Tell your beautiful *protégée* that Henri De La Rochejaquelein has kept his

word ; the prison of Doué no longer exists, the captives are free, in great haste.

“ Yours devotedly,

“ HENRI DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN.”

Madame D'Arbley thought for a moment, and then said—

“ If you could be got to the Isle of Noirmontiers, you would be perfectly safe with the patriots ; and either Henri or Captain Charette would be sure to see you safely embark for England ; you will certainly find your father and Claude there, and there will, no doubt, be English vessels off the coast ; I wish somehow you were gone before the arrival of my husband.”

“ Why, Ernestine, why do you wish that ?” asked Fanny somewhat uneasy, “ do you apprehend any obstructions to our project from him ?”

“No, my love, I trust not,” said madame thoughtfully, “we must, however, keep very secret about Henri De La Rochejaquelein meeting us, and all knowledge of the news we have just heard; indeed, it will be much better not to speak about your father and Claude at all.”

While conversing on this subject, and turning over many plans in their heads, one of the servants entered the room saying—

“There was a party of cavalry at the gate, and she was sure that Monsieur the Colonel was with them.”

Madame D’Arblay started and became greatly agitated, while Fanny pressing her hand said—

“I will leave you, dear Ernestine, to meet Monsieur alone,” and kissing her pale cheek, she hurried to her own chamber where she found Hannah sitting sewing with a very grave and serious look in her usually open and cheerful countenance—

“You are looking very grave, Hannah,” remarked our heroine sitting down, “especially after hearing such good news about dear Claude. Have you heard of Colonel D’Arblay’s arrival?”

“It’s that very thing, my dear,” said Hannah, “that makes me very thoughtful. I guessed who it was when I saw the troop of soldiers ride up to the gate—I wish we were safe out of the Chateau, and that we were with the rebels, as they call the country people; I’m afraid of this Monsieur D’Arblay.”

“Why what on earth can make you afraid of a person you never saw,” said Fanny, although she inwardly experienced the same feeling.

“Well, indeed, Miss Fanny,” said Hannah putting aside her work: “I’m afraid of him, but not without cause; you know at first I could make nothing out of the language the people speak about these parts, so of course I said little or nothing to them, but being in a

measure deprived of the use of my tongue, I make double use of my eyes. You know the fine madame we found enstalled here as house-keeper, Madame Bonychaps, as she calls herself."

"Bonchamps," said Fanny with a smile.

"Yes, that's her name, Miss Fanny; you see, she keeps the keys of this huge house, and there are a great number of rooms shut up; some days ago when you and madame were gone for a walk into the hamlet, I amused myself by wandering through the Chateau; I was standing in the recess of a window, and without her seeing me, this madame Bonchamps comes sailing along the gallery and, taking a key from her pocket, opens one of the doors and goes into the room without closing it; so, being of a rather curious disposition, I thought I would have a look into the room, and putting my face in at the door, to my surprise, I beheld a most magnificently furnished bed-chamber, with costly new furniture, fine

mirrors and toilet tables, and all kinds of beautiful things for a grand French lady's toilet, but what struck me most was, Madame Bonchamps—who was packing up, in two great trunks, such fine robes of silk and satin, and several bonnets and crapes and satin mantelets; she had her back to me, and was very busy putting these things away, so I had a full opportunity of observing her. Within a yard of the door I saw lying on the floor a folded letter, as if just dropped; now, my dear Miss Fanny, the sight of all these fine things, which I well knew could never have belonged to Madame D'Arblay, for they were quite new, and of the present fashion, made me feel more curiosity; I thought I would even get hold of the letter, and I contrived to do so and then came away."

"But, my good Hannah," said Fanny, thoughtfully, "you did very wrong; what advantage could the letter be to you as you could

not read its contents, even if it was right for you to do so."

"Law, Miss Fanny," said Hannah, quite calmly, "you know we are in an enemy's country, and that if you suspect an enemy, it's all fair to find him out if you can, no matter by what means."

"I cannot agree with you there, Hannah. Why should you set down Madame Bonchamps as an enemy. She is very civil and obliging; to be sure she is not very young, yet the dresses might belong to her, and it might have been her room before we arrived here."

"No, Miss Fanny, the dresses were not hers, and it could not have been her room, for though she is stately and stiff enough in manner, the robes I saw would look very absurd on a woman like our housekeeper. No, depend on it they were the garments of a person of rank. I could not read the letter it is true, but I could read Colonel D'Arblay's name at

the bottom, and it is addressed to the house-keeper. But I will shew it you, Miss Fanny."

"No, Hannah, I would not read it on any account, it would be very wrong to pry into the secrets of any one, let alone those whose hospitality we are experiencing."

"But, my dear miss," said Hannah, earnestly, "you blame me, without hearing all I have to say, and you may well suppose I would not have acted as I have done but for your sake."

"My dear Hannah, I am certain of that," said Fanny Fleetwood, affectionately, "so let me hear the rest of your story, for, to tell you the truth, a strange feeling of dread has come over me, which I cannot account for, and especially after having heard such good tidings about my dear father and Claude."

"Ah, I know there is something evil coming," said Hannah, "however, you shall hear all I know, and then you can judge for yourself. Having got possession of the letter, and having

seen all the fine things in the locked up room, I became anxious to know more—it's so like our sex—Miss Fanny," added Hannah, with a smile. "You must know, that down in the village is an old dame, who remembers Madame D'Arblay's marriage, and has known Monsieur D'Arblay from his childhood; this old dame's husband was a sailor, and in her youth shewent with him a voyage to London—the two countries were at peace then—her husband caught a bad fever and was taken to a hospital, and the ship sailed without them; her husband, unfortunately, died, and dame Minchen took a fancy to stay in the country; some ladies were very kind to her, and being a very good looking young girl, and very clever, one of them took her into her service, and thus she remained seven years in England, and learned to speak, and read, and write the language. After a variety of adventures, she returned to France, and came down to her native place, and married a farmer, who, dying some four

years ago, left her in very comfortable circumstances. I heard Madame D'Arblay one day mention old Dame Minchen, as a very curious and entertaining old woman, who had travelled over many strange lands, and had spent years in England, so I felt a wish to go and see and talk with her, for there was no danger in any of the peasantry here knowing I was an Englishwoman, so I went to see her. You can't think how delighted the old dame was, she kissed me repeatedly, said she loved England, and all belonging to it. Dear me, she speaks English like a native ; so, almost every day since, I have gone to sit and chat with Dame Minchen ; she speaks most affectionately of Madame D'Arblay, but always shakes her head when I mention the Colonel. I determined to tell Dame Minchen of the things I had seen in the room, and I did so, but she expressed no surprise.

“ ‘ Oh,’ said she, ‘ so you found out Madame Bonchamps. Ah, those things you saw were

for the grand dame that was coming here from Paris ; it was said she was to be married to the Colonel ; there was a fine carriage and horses, and men servants, but a few days before madame's arrival, the Colonel's intendant came and sent away the carriages and servants, and a great many other things, and a few female domestics replaced them—they came, I believe, from Nantes. Madame Bonchamps, the housekeeper, however, remained, and then the intendant gave out that madame had returned from India, and that the Colonel thought she was dead many years ago ; so I suppose Madame Bonchamps was packing up the lady's finery when you saw her—I wonder who she was ?

“ I then told Dame Minchen about the letter, and she became as curious as myself, so I gave it to her, and she read, and told me the contents. The letter told the housekeeper to pack up all the dresses and other things in the rooms, and to keep them carefully locked—that he intended removing Madame as soon as possible ;

and, above all, to keep a strict watch over the English girl, as she was a prize worth looking after."

"Good heavens! what can he mean?" exclaimed Fanny, with a flushed, and then a pale cheek.

"Now you see, miss," said Hannah, with a self-satisfied look, "I was not so much in the wrong after all. When old Dame Minchen read this, she shook her head, and said—

"'He is a bad man, and ever was. He married Madame for her money, and it was said that he had another wife somewhere. All his dependents were afraid of him; but he was an uncommon handsome man. You must take care,' continued old Dame Minchen, 'of your young mistress; and if you take my advice, you and she will get away out of the Chateau before he comes. Dress in a country girl's garments, and go into the Marais, where you would be quite safe until you could get off in some ship for England; all the peasants and

people of that district would help you, and the revolutionary army won't venture into that country.'

"I suppose, then," said Fanny, "you told Dame Minchen all about our being taken by the French ship?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Fanny, I told her all about us. No one here takes you for Madame's daughter; there is no risk with them; they hate, in their hearts, the new government of France; they love the royal family, and they are fighting for them. Now, Miss Fanny," continued Hannah, "what do you mean to do? it is time to think, now the Colonel is come. If we delay, it may be too late to escape, as poor Madame will be unable to help us. Ah! if the Vendéans could catch hold of him, they would kill him; they say he is the most cruel and savage of all the French officers under some general whose name I forget."

Fanny was bewildered. She would like to have consulted with her beloved friend, and ex-

pose her husband's bad conduct and designs to her. She could hear a good deal of noise and bustle in the Chateau, even from their room, which was in a remote wing, it having been selected for the beautiful view it commanded of the river and lake.

"You had better go and see Madame," said Fanny, "and say I would rather keep to my chamber this evening, and beg her to excuse me. You can bring me my coffee here. Madame, no doubt, will come to see me, after the first bustle and strangeness of her meeting with her husband passes off. Try and learn how many soldiers came with him to the Chateau."

"I was just thinking of doing so, Miss Fanny," said Hannah, rising to leave the room. "Lock the door after me, Miss Fanny; I don't like those lawless, revolutionary soldiers."

Fanny took care to do as Hannah advised, and then sat down, plunged in very painful

thought. In less than half an hour Hannah returned, bringing lights and a tray with tea and coffee. She looked frightened, and was pale as death; putting down the tray, she locked the door.

“Oh, Miss Fanny,” said the kind and devoted Hannah, “I have shocking news;—there, for God’s sake, don’t look so pale. What an old fool I am to speak so hastily. You will want all your courage and energy now. There, read that. Poor Madame slipped it into my hand; she looks wretched, but says she will see you by-and-bye.”

Fanny took the slip of paper, and going to the lamp, read the few words it contained. They were—

“My beloved child!—Rouse all your natural spirit, and make up your mind to fly from this house during the night. The companion my husband has brought with him is Colonel Thornback!”

“Merciful heaven! I’m lost,” exclaimed Fanny, falling back into the chair, and dropping the paper. “Colonel Thornback in France—in this Chateau!”

Hannah looked as pale as death, saying—

“It’s quite true, miss; I saw him myself going into the saloon where Colonel D’Arblay was supping with another officer. I knew that horrid man at a glance, though he is dressed in a French officer’s uniform. I never saw him but twice. The first time, you know, was when I went to see Westminster Abbey, with you, miss; and poor, dear Mr. Claude knocked him down. I afterwards saw him with a very horrid man, examining your good uncle Fleetwood’s house. I told you that at the time, but you said you were quite safe from such a bad man, under your uncle’s protection; and now—wonderful to think—he is here, and with Madame’s husband!”

“How many soldiers are there?” questioned Fanny, anxiously.

“There are fifty dragoons, miss—nearly a score in the Chateau, and the rest in the village, and two regiments of infantry within a mile of this, in another village larger than our hamlet.”

“Heavens !” ejaculated poor Fanny, “what shall we do—how escape with this number of soldiers about us ? What can that horrid villain, Thornback, be doing in the French army, and with madame’s husband.”

“I’m so bewildered, miss,” said Hannah, “that I do not know what to advise. We must wait till madame comes. I will pack up a few things in a bundle, at all events, ready to go, if we can.”

Fanny felt intensely desirous to see Madame D’Arblay, and, also, in her own mind, resolved to attempt to escape into the district of the Marais, or endeavour to get to Noirmontiers. Still she trembled to think of the perils she might have to encounter, passing a district

through whose entire length and breadth a cruel and unrelentless war was raging.

The clock of the Chateau had tolled the eleventh hour of the night, when a knock was heard at their door. Hannah having unlocked it, Madame D'Arblay entered the room, looking dejected, and miserably pale and haggard. Fanny threw herself into her arms, kissing her cold cheek, wet with tears, with the affection of a child.

"Ah, Ernestine, you look miserable," said Fanny, holding her hand in hers; "this *réunion* with Monsieur D'Arblay has brought no happiness with it."

"Happiness, my child," returned madame; "oh, no, far from it—I considered it my duty—but now I wish to God I had not written to my husband, but sought refuge for you and myself amongst the royalists. Alas! my child, my husband was never a good man; now I can only consider him a monster of wickedness and crime!"

“Good Heavens !” ejaculated our heroine, “he has not surely in so short a period—”

“Listen to me, my love,” interrupted Madame, “for we have little time to spare ; you and Hannah must get out of the Chateau to-night. The delay of a day might—God help me, I dare not think what such a delay might bring about. It is three leagues, my poor child, from here to Saint Morent—alas ! how will you traverse that distance unprotected and on foot—the fatigue—”

“Nay, talk not of the fatigue, Ernestine ; I think nothing of walking three leagues ; but how to find the way—and what to do when there !”

“You cannot miss the way, my love, once on the road, which, you know, runs by the Chateau gates ; but, I recollect, the bridge was broken down when we passed, but there will certainly be a boat there. First, I want to explain to you what to do, for fear of being interrupted ; afterwards, I will give you my

reasons for your sudden flight. When you get to Saint Morent, go to the little auberge we stopped at; you know how kind Dame Marguerite's daughters were; her two sons are with Henri de la Rochejaquelein; tell her plainly you wish to escape from the power of Colonel D'Arblay, and want to proceed to wherever the force of La Rochejaquelein is stationed. She will, at once, procure you peasants' clothes, and mules, and, perhaps, a guide, who will take you through a part of the country in which no troops will pursue you. We have plenty of gold, so that will not be wanting. Once you reach the quarters of Henri de la Rochejaquelein you are safe; he will protect you with his life, and, no doubt, restore you to your father and Claude, if they have not escaped to England, which I feel satisfied is not the case; for they would never leave this country till assured of your safety." Madame D'Arblay sighed heavily, and pressing the hand of the attentive Fanny, continued

—“ And now, my beloved girl, I will tell you the reason of all this.

“ When I met my husband, after fourteen or fifteen years’ separation, my heart palpitated violently, for you know how strangely and unfeelingly I was deserted. I will say little of our meeting—it was false and heartless on his part. We were alone—the two officers that came with him, he said, were getting accommodation for the men and horses in the village, but would be back shortly. Having ordered some refreshment and wine, he sat down, and, looking me keenly in the face, said—

“ ‘ So, Ernestine, you met that boy rebel, La Rochejaquelein !’ Swearing a frightful oath, he continued—‘ I’ll never cease till I hang him on a tree, and massacre every man in his troop !’

“ Oh, Fanny, my child, how I trembled, as I looked into the changed and terrible face of my husband. When we parted, he was a tall and very handsome man, and not more than thirty

—he is now about forty-five—and his figure of immense proportions—his beard, whiskers, and moustaches almost hide every part of his face—but his dark eyes, ah ! they have a fearful power in their glance.

“ ‘What had you to say or do with this man?’ continued my husband, as he fixed his eyes upon me.

“ ‘Alas ! I had no spirit left in me—I was cowed ; however, I replied—he only shewed us a passage across the Morent.

“ ‘And pray,’ he returned, with a sneer, ‘was it you or your fair friend that induced him to attack Doué, massacre the guards, and release the English prisoners there ? Do you know the doom, Ernestine, you have brought upon yourself, if this was known to any of the revolutionary commissioners?’

“ Recovering some portion of my spirit, and hurt and indignant at such language and manner, during the first hour of our meeting,

I replied, in a tone that expressed my feelings perhaps more than prudence dictated, and our critical situation warranted.

“ My husband looked at me a moment seemingly surprised ; and then, without a word, helped himself to some wine. Just then there was a knock at the door of the saloon, and the sergeant of the troop entered.

“ ‘ Oh ! it’s you, Bontemps,’ said my husband ; ‘ have you found quarters for the men and horses in the hamlet ?’

“ ‘ Yes, with some difficulty, Colonel,’ replied the sergeant. ‘ The hamlet is a regular nest of rebels. There’s not a grain of corn to be found, nor an able-bodied man in the village ; they must have buried the corn, Colonel.’

“ ‘ Ah !’ returned Monsieur D’Arblay, fiercely, ‘ I’ll teach them a lesson before we go, that they will remember—I will not leave them a roof to cover them. Where’s Captain Thornback ?’

“On hearing that name I started up electrified.

“‘Could it be possible,’ I thought to myself, repeating that horrid name.

“The sergeant replied, he was coming up from the village with Cornet Bellaire, and then added—

“‘What are we to do without corn, Colonel?’

“‘Oh, I will tell you what to do,’ said my husband, with a fiendish laugh; ‘take two of the elders, since all the young ones are with the rebels, tie them up, and flog them in the face of the whole village till they tell where the corn is hid—for I know there must be abundance somewhere.’

“‘It shall be done this moment, Colonel.’

“And the man was retiring when horror-struck at the thought of such an act of cruelty being committed, I stepped between the sergeant and the door. The door opened, and an officer in uniform entered the room; I fell

back, and looked up in his face, exclaiming, as I did so, involuntarily—

“ ‘Good God, Colonel Thornback !’ with a low voice but a sneer curling his lip, the wretch said : ‘ Captain Thornback, madame, at your service,’ and then in English though he spoke exceedingly good French, he added, ‘ I left my title of colonel with my worthy friends in England ; but you look charmingly, madame, I trust your fair friend, Miss Fleetwood, is as beautiful as ever.’

“ I was so utterly confounded that I remained incapable of uttering a word, and sunk into a chair ; it seemed to me so incomprehensible to thus meet that bad man, and with my husband.

“ ‘ You seem surprised, Ernestine,’ said Monsieur D’Arblay ‘ at meeting this gentleman ; but though it may seem strange, it is very easily explained : Captain Thornback served in the French armies on the Rhine years back,

and liking our habits and customs better than the American, where he obtained the grade of colonel, he preferred returning to his old rank of captain to going back to America. He will conduct you and Miss Fleetwood to-morrow morning to Thouars, as you cannot possibly stay in this rebellious district. This Chateau will be occupied by a cavalry force, and every village and town either harbouring or furnishing rebels with arms or men I will rase to the ground; I will, and must first make an example of this Hamlet—not a cottage or house will I leave standing as a refuge for a race of rebellious villains !’

“ ‘ And is it thus, monsieur,’ I replied bitterly, ‘ you treat your unfortunate tenantry after so many years’ absence from them.’

“ ‘ They are no longer mine, madame, I sold the estate, I am happy to say ; but even if I had not, my duty to my country, freed, thank God, from a yoke of tyrants, would cause me

to act in the same manner as I intend doing now.'

" 'Then, God help them and unfortunate France, delivered as you call it from one tyrant to suffer from the horrors of ten thousand infinitely more cruel.'

" 'You are an aristocrat, Ernestine,' returned my husband coolly, 'do not utter such sentiments when at Thouars, or our separation will be eternal.'

" 'Would to God we had never met again,' I exclaimed passionately, as I left the room disgusted and horrified.

A summons at the door caused Madame D'Arblay to cease. It was the housekeeper, Madame Bonchamps, with a curious smile on her face; she dropped a very slight curtsy, saying—

"The colonel requires your presence immediately, madame."

Madame D'Arblay sighed, rose up, saying—

"I will follow you," but the housekeeper

did not stir, so, not wishing to create any observation, she merely said to Miss Fleetwood : “ well, my love, you will be ready to-morrow early for your journey ; do not be frightened by the soldiers, good night.”

When the door closed upon madame and the housekeeper, Fanny looked with an expression of dismay into the face of Hannah, saying in a low voice—

“ Merciful Heaven, what shall we do—how can we get out of this Chateau.”

“ Keep up your spirits, dear Miss Fanny,” said Hannah, “ leave it to me, I will get you out of the house safe enough ; and as to a walk of nine miles on a fine night it’s nothing ; you have walked more than that often. Lock the door after me, I am going down to the servants’ hall for half-an-hour ; I shall have arranged every thing by that time.”

So saying, the now resolute Hannah left the room, poor Fanny making a great effort to recover her usual spirit and determination.

CHAPTER VI.

WE have already stated in our previous narrative how Colonel Thornback visited France during the monarchy, and served in her army on the Rhine as a volunteer ; and, being a man of undoubted courage, received a commission ; but this not answering his purpose, for he was a mere adventurer, after the campaign he returned to France. As he lived entirely upon his wits ; the gaming saloons of Paris, then in their glory, furnished him the means, associating as he did constantly with a gang of swindlers ; here

he formed his first acquaintance with Monsieur D'Arblay, who was fast dissipating the fine fortune he had received with his wife. He was then a very handsome man, but licentious and unprincipled, and even before his marriage had formed a connection with a Madame De T——, a lady somewhat notorious at that period for her beauty, her unscrupulous love of gold, and her reckless principles and extravagance.

However, being suspected, and finally discovered in a dangerous conspiracy, he fled, and sailed for India with his wife, determined to leave her there, and after a time to return to France, feeling quite satisfied that the revolution would break out before his return.

Captain Thornback himself was also obliged to leave Paris, several of his associates having been detected, imprisoned, and condemned to the galleys. He proceeded to Belgium; but at that period that country was but a poor place for gentlemen of his profession. So

taking upon himself the title of Colonel, he sailed for England. We have also stated how he prospered there. Furious at his detection and pursuit by Claude Tregannon, after his escape from St. Giles's Rookery, he hurried into Cornwall, found the cave and the document his brother had concealed there; and then, though burning to revenge himself and his brother's death, he embarked in a small smack for Jersey. He had no fear whatever in returning to France in its then convulsed state; but reckless in mind and principle, he rather enjoyed the idea of visiting the scene of such acts as horrified all Europe.

From Jersey, therefore, he crossed over, and made his way to Paris; his first object being to find Sir James Tregannon, who he discovered was living in the Faubourg St. Antoine, on great terms of intimacy with Marat, Danton, and Santerre, and one of the fiercest and cruellest members in their club, calling himself simple citizen James Tregannon. Thorn-

back found several of his old associates in Paris, hot and fiery Republicans; he soon joined their club, and thus in a short time became enrolled as one of the Mountain. To his surprise, he encountered Monsieur D'Arblay, who had been released from prison, and was working heart and soul to get into power. They renewed their intimacy, and then citizen Thornback, as he styled himself, informed Monsieur D'Arblay that his wife was in England, mentioning the situation she was in, and the family she was residing with.

“Ha,” exclaimed Monsieur D'Arblay, “so she got from India. However, it's not very likely she will ever come to France; she considers me dead.”

Monsieur D'Arblay had renewed his intimacy with the notorious Madame T——; he had recovered his estate of Chateau Bois-Philibert, and had sent down a housekeeper and furniture, intending it as a retreat for madame, if

affairs, in which she was meddling, should turn out unfortunate.

William Thornback wrote a letter to James Tregannon, whose astonishment on receiving it was great ; but recollecting George Thornback's history, he at once conjectured the writer was his brother.

It is unnecessary to lengthen our story with a full recital of what passed in the interview between them ; it is sufficient to state that James Tregannon acceded to William Thornback's demands, and wrote at once to London. His attorney in London was ordered to claim the Pentoven estate, and arrears of rent, as well as his aunt's property, he being her nearest male relative ; and also to come to terms with Trelawney, the Leeds' constable, at any sacrifice, as he was resolved to proceed to England and face the claimant to the Tregannon estate. Sir James also learned from William Thornback, that Claude Tregannon

had sailed for India, and could not be back under twelve months at least; but the document he so much coveted was still in the possession of another, who was not likely to restore it without receiving the stipulated six thousand pounds.

Several months rolled on. Monsieur D'Arblay's party at last, by the fall of the Girondists, gained the ascendancy, whilst he himself getting appointed Colonel of a cavalry regiment, with the promise of a higher post almost immediately, set out to join General Queteneau. His amazement was great when he received his wife's letter, relating her capture on her passage to England.

She also mentioned that she had passed Miss Fleetwood off as her daughter, hoping he would be enabled to restore her to her own country.

Little could Madame D'Arblay have imagined, when she sent her letter, the effect it would produce, for she supposed that her

movements, since they had parted in India, were as much unknown to him as the name of Fleetwood. But he had been informed of all relative to both by William Thornback. He wanted money, and no sooner had he read his wife's communication than he dispatched a messenger to the Englishman, telling him that Miss Fleetwood was at his chateau and her father and lover were prisoners at Doué. He added, that if he would join him immediately he should be appointed captain in his regiment, and between them he had no doubt they could manage to convert the possession of the young heiress into a mine of gold.

William Thornback had just parted from James Tregannon, who had received letters from London, stating that he and his wife might safely return to England; that the constable, Trelawney, was dead; that he had nothing to fear, and that his presence was absolutely necessary. He procured passports and proceeded into the Netherlands, promising Wil-

liam Thornback that the moment he should obtain the six thousand pounds out of the Pentoven estate he would communicate with him.

Still possessed of the dangerous document, and satisfied that he held James Tregannon in his power, Thornback saw him depart without any alarm or uneasiness concerning their contract. But the receipt of Monsieur D'Arblay's letter gave him most exquisite pleasure. He could, he saw in a moment, crush his hated enemy in his dearest hopes; and, abandoning his schemes in Paris, he at once set out for the Province of Poitou, and joined Colonel D'Arblay, who had no difficulty in getting General Queteneau to appoint his friend to a captaincy, stating, as a plea, that he had formerly served with distinction on the Rhine. At this time the revolutionary army of France was composed of raw recruits and inexperienced officers; therefore Captain Thornback was very well

received, and at once took his post in a regiment of dragoons.

Nothing, therefore, could exceed the rage and vexation of Captain Thornback, when intelligence reached them that the prison of Doué had been stormed by Henri De La Roche-Jaquelein, the garrison nearly cut to pieces, and the prisoners set free, and sent into the district held by the Vendean leader, Charette.

Seeing there was no time to lose, or Miss Fleetwood would also escape out of their hands, Colonel D'Arblay, his accomplice, and a party of Dragoons, left for the Chateau Bois-Philibert; General Queteneau, at the same time, advancing upon Thouars with a powerful force, determined to crush and entirely annihilate the Vendean in that province.

Having accounted to our readers, in as brief a manner as possible, for the appearance of Captain Thornback with Colonel D'Arblay in the Chateau Bois-Philibert, we will return to

our heroine, whom we left anxiously awaiting the coming of Hannah, and trusting to Providence that nothing unforeseen might prevent their escape that night from the Chateau.

In less than half an hour the faithful attendant appeared, and Fanny perceived by her cheerful countenance that nothing had occurred to disturb their projects.

“It’s all settled nicely, Miss Fanny, thanks to old Joseph, the gardener. I met Madame D’Arblay in the servants’ hall, giving directions for accommodating a score of dragoons in the Chateau, and the housekeeper luckily being in the saloon, she whispered me—

“‘I have ordered Joseph, the gardener, to place a ladder against the end window of the conservatory; you can get into it from your gallery, as not a soul will sleep in your wing of the Chateau. From the window of the conservatory you can descend into the garden, and Joseph, who hates the very name of a soldier, will leave the garden gate open. There is no

other way for you to leave, for all the gates will be locked. Tell my beloved Fanny that I will pray for her safety, and trust in God I may yet escape from this land never to return.'

"This was all she could say, for that cunning Mrs. Bonchamps came in, and Madame D'Arblay left the hall. I talked and chatted with the other servants quite gaily, though I didn't understand a word they said, or they me, and taking some hot water from the fountain, I left without waiting for supper; but as I came along the gallery, I stepped into the conservatory, and, sure enough, there was the ladder ready. It's not more than twenty odd feet down to the terrace, so I think we can manage that; but we must wait till a very late hour, for those noisy troopers will sit late, I fear, drinking."

"God Grant that they may not keep a watch round the Chateau all night, and discover us escaping," said Fanny, anxiously.

“Oh, they will keep watch, no doubt,” returned Hannah, “at the gates, and in the hall and outposts ; but there is a strong force in the village, and they do not suspect we have any idea of escaping ; besides, the conservatory is over the terrace, and the terrace leads only into the garden ; the private path through the wood, you know, brings us out upon the main road, close to the lake.”

“Well,” observed Fanny, fervently, “I trust in Providence we shall succeed.”

“Had you not better lie down, Miss Fanny,” said Hannah, as she was actively engaged tying up some things in a bundle ; “it will be past one o’clock before we can attempt to stir.”

“No, Hannah, I should not sleep ; I shall not feel in the least the loss of a few hours’ rest. Oh ! I wish Madame A’Arblay could fly with us ; she will never know peace or happiness with that bad man, her husband. His very companionship with that ruffian, Thorn-

back — extraordinary as it is—shows what he is.”

As the hour approached for their departure, Fanny acquired courage and nerve. Hannah listened frequently, from the end of the corridor, to the various sounds throughout the house, till about one o'clock, when all seemed to be at rest, and a dead silence reigned throughout the mansion.

It was a fine still night, and, though no moon, it was yet tolerably light, for the sky was unclouded. Hannah waited yet another half-hour, and then taking up her bundle, and locking the door, carrying the key with her, to cause delay to those seeking them in the morning, accompanied by her young mistress, proceeded along the gallery, without any light but what came in through the windows.

In a short time they reached the conservatory, once the pride and delight of Madame D'Arblay, by whose directions it had been erected and ornamented, but now neglected

and in ruins. Underneath was a long stone terrace, facing the extensive gardens, which were surrounded by a very high stone wall, a wood of some extent extended from the outside to the banks of the river. Entering the conservatory, they closed the door, and proceeding to the window, found it open, and the ladder placed in a convenient position, so that they might get upon it easily. Hannah gazed through the window and listened anxiously several minutes, but no unusual sound disturbed the stillness of the night, or rather early morning; in less than two hours it would be dawn, so there was no time to lose. Fanny had attired herself as plainly as it was possible, dispensing with any kind of cloak, merely a plain shawl and straw bonnet which she had purchased at Rochelle.

She was by no means a timid or fearful girl, and was blessed with a fine constitution—young, strong, and active—she, therefore, got on the ladder, and descended with great ease, Hannah

followed, and having gained the terrace, they were descending the flight of steps into the garden, when they caught the sound of a man evidently whistling a tune; they paused in great alarm; the next moment they heard him beneath the terrace, humming, in a careless, lively manner, the song of—

“Malbrook s'en vá a la guerre.”

“Good Heavens!” whispered Fanny to the terrified Hannah, crouching down at the same time, “there is a sentinel beneath the terrace, he is walking up and down before the back entrance to the Chateau—I caught a glimpse of him, and a musket on his shoulder—what shall we do?”

Looking through the balustrades, by the faint light, they watched the man, who kept alternately humming and whistling “Malbrook;” his walk did not extend as far as the steps of the terrace; and just opposite to the

stairs was a long range of flowering evergreens. Fanny examined the spot as well as she could, and, knowing the garden, said—

“We must venture across the walk, and steal along the shrubs and trees, and get to the gate—once across the walk, the rest will be easy—so mind how you tread on the gravel—we cannot lose time.”

So saying, Fanny descended the flight of stairs, watching till the man turned in his walk; he was not more than ten yards from them, she sprung lightly across the walk, and crouched down behind a bushy laurestina, Hannah followed her example, and then both paused, for a moment, to listen, but the sentinel only changed his tune, getting tired of “Malbrook.” Their task was now comparatively easy, keeping the shrubs and bushes between them and the sentry, they reached the small door leading out from the garden into the wood. This they opened noiselessly, and

issued out into the private path leading down to the river.

“Thank God, we have escaped that danger,” exclaimed Fanny, breathing freely, after her excitement; “now, Hannah, we must walk the nine miles as fast as possible. When I was a young girl, I remember walking from Grange House into Charmouth with dear Claude for a wager, and that was four miles, and I did it in an hour.”

“Yes,” answered Hannah, with her usual merry laugh when pleased; “and the wager was a kiss—so whether you won or lost you were sure of the kiss. Ah, Miss Fanny, was not that the case?”

“Oh, fie, Hannah,” returned the maiden, stepping out at a pace that almost puzzled Hannah; “you know there is a great deal of difference in giving a kiss and receiving one.”

“Dear me, no, Miss Fanny, not at the age of fourteen, and you were scarcely that then. Ah, those were happy days.”

“Do not sigh, Hannah—God is good and bountiful—there may be many happy days yet to come. Oh, if Claude was only near us, I should not fear anything.”

In less than a quarter of an hour they reached the main road which ran along the river. It was a sweet, quiet scene, lighted only by the bright stars—the broad surface of the lake, unrippled by a breath of wind, looked like a vast mirror, with the stars sparkling beneath its surface, the rich dark foliage of the tall trees, that covered one side of the bank, forming a dense shadow.

Continuing along the road, and not encountering a human being, in something more than two hours and a half, they reached the side of the Morent just as daylight rendered every object distinct, and then they were delighted to perceive that the peasantry had thrown the long trunks of trees across the broken buttresses of the bridge, thus enabling them to cross to the hamlet.

It was nearly four o'clock, when they reached the front of the neat auberge, where they had rested some four weeks previously. There did not appear to be a living thing stirring in the hamlet save a few curs outside the cottages, and these set up a bark as our fugitives approached.

"We must wake the people up," said Hannah; "in two or three hours we shall be missed, and, doubtless, pursued, and we must get up into the hills where they cannot follow us."

So saying, she knocked hard at the auberge door.

"Eh, Mon Dieu," exclaimed a head, with a red night-cap on it, popped suddenly out of a window above them. "Who have we here, at this early hour?"

Fanny looked up, and recognized the head as that of a young lad belonging to the establishment, who had been very attentive and

eager to serve them when last there, and recollecting his name, said—

“Be quick, Ambroise, and open the door, like a ‘*bon garçon*.’”

“Ah, *mon Dieu* ! mademoiselle, is it you,” exclaimed the lad, drawing off his red cap, and thereby displaying a much redder head, “I will dress and open the door.”

In three or four minutes the amazed Ambroise was attired, had roused the two daughters of old Dame Marguerite, and opened the door with a smile of infinite good humour and joy in his intelligent features, for he was greatly charmed with the beauty and grace of the fair English maiden. Shewing them into the neat little sitting room, he said—

“Oh, mademoiselle, where have you come from at this hour, and on foot ; I have called Rose and Janette, and they will be here in a minute.”

“We have been obliged to run away from the revolutionary soldiers, Ambroise ; they

have taken the Chateau, and they would have made us prisoners only we got away in the night," replied Fanny.

"Curse them!" exclaimed the lad, vehemently, and shaking his closed hand, "when I am a man wont I kill them; but where is Madame—ah, here is Janette."

As he spoke, the young girl, hastily attired, entered the room, looking at Fanny and her attendant with great astonishment.

Fanny soon satisfied her curiosity, and told her story: she already knew she was English, and not Madame D'Arblay's daughter, for once quit of Rochelle, and in the district of the insurgents, there was no need of deception, especially as Madame D'Arblay was well known in the hamlet of Saint Morent, and in the whole district where the Vendean war raged. The inhabitants were looking towards England for help and ammunition, therefore it was quite unnecessary to disguise Fanny's country. Her exquisite beauty and grace,

the pleasing tone of her voice in speaking French, quite captivated all her hearers, and Rose and Janette were most assiduous in their attention to her, while staying at their grandmother's auberge; but now, understanding the danger she was in, their anxiety and zeal was redoubled to serve her.

"We have a good quiet pair of mules in the stables," said the eldest of the girls, and Ambroise knows every inch of the road across the hills to Andre, where La Rochejaquelein's army is now, and even if they pursue you, they cannot find or follow the path Ambroise will take you."

Miss Fleetwood felt extremely grateful, and told the two girls that Ambroise should be well rewarded, and all expenses paid—

"Ah, mademoiselle," returned the simple but kind-hearted girls, "if we were never to be paid, and had it in our power to afford you other assistance, we would do it cheerfully. We have our two brothers fighting in the

army of Monsieur Henri, and we pray to the Blessed Virgin that she may give them victory over the cruel wretches that murdered our good king."

In half an hour Fanny and Hannah had some hot coffee and white cakes for breakfast, and Ambroise, rejoiced at having to conduct our heroine to Andre, was busily preparing the mules for their departure. The grandmother was able to get up and bid them farewell, and kissing Fanny's cheek blessed her repeatedly, praying that God would protect and restore her to her country and her parent.

Grea'ly affected by the simple, kind-hearted generosity of the hostess of Saint Morent, and her two pretty grandchildren, considerably refreshed by the short rest and breakfast, and full of hope and anticipation of getting to Andre without being overtaken, Fanny Fleetwood and Hannah pursued their journey, on two good mules, sitting on very comfortable pillions, and guided by Ambroise, dressed in

his Sunday attire, with a good stick in his hand, and feeling quite proud of his responsibility.

We must, however, leave our heroine to pursue her perilous journey—for perilous it was—while in our next chapter we enquire into the fate of our hero and Mr. Fleetwood.

CHAPTER VII.

WE left Mr. Fleetwood and Claude Tregannon prisoners on board the corvette, *Legere*, which vessel anchored in the Port of Rochelle. The prisoners were immediately landed and marched to the common prison of the town, and confined in separate cells. This was a severe trial to both ; however, after three days, to their great joy, they were again united. Their persons and attire being carefully examined, and everything they possessed taken from them ; they were then told they were to

be taken to the prison of Doué, and there accordingly they were marched attended and guarded by a strong escort of mounted *gens d'armes*.

Doué was a remarkably strong place, but situated in a very healthy locality. The chambers were large and well ventilated. By a piece of good fortune the jailor did not object to permit Claude Tregannon and Mr. Fleetwood to occupy the same cell, and their time passed, conversing about, and conjecturing the probable fate of their beloved Fanny, hoping that Madame D'Arblay might be able to shelter and protect her, and finally get her to England. As to themselves, to escape was totally out of the question ; but liberty was nearer than their most sanguine expectations could have anticipated. One night they were roused from their sleep by the thunder of cannon from the embattled walls of the prison. Claude sprang from his straw pallet,

hastily dressed himself, and helped Mr. Fleetwood to do the same, saying—

“Depend on it, my dear sir, the fort is attacked by the Vendéans. You know, the jailor said the other day, that the insurgents were in great force in the Marais, and that he expected that the prisoners would be removed to Nantes, but that they feared to let them traverse the country between Doué and that place, till General Queteneau’s army was organized and ready to advance upon the rebels.”

“God Grant that they may gain the day,” said Mr. Fleetwood, “as you say they are royalists.”

A tremendous uproar ensued throughout the building, with frequent discharges of musketry. After the first discharge, the cannon no longer thundered from the ramparts; the uproar evidently increased, and the discharges of muskets and pistols, and the cries of furious

and enraged combatants came closer and closer. Just then a key was put in the door, the bolts drawn, and the jailor, with his wife and two children, rushed, with looks of terror, into the chamber.

The jailor's wife threw herself at the feet of Claude, saying, her eyes filled with tears—

“Save us, monsieur, save us from the Vendéans; we shewed you some kindness; in return, save my children. It is to release the English prisoners that they have attacked the prison.”

A loud shout and a rapid discharge of muskets and pistols was heard, a second triumphant shout, and then the tramp of many feet sounded along the stone passage.

“Ah, *mon Dieu* ! they come,” exclaimed the woman and children.

“Be not afraid,” said Claude, advancing between them and the door. “The royalists will not hurt women.”

As he spoke, some twelve or fourteen men

came rushing along the passage and then into the chamber, headed by a handsome young man in a plain dress, with a crimson sash, with a large knot twisted over the shoulder and waist, and in which were a brace of pistols. His face was highly flushed from the excitement of the combat. With his sword in his right hand, a pistol in his left, he advanced close to Claude, and looking up into his face, said—

“Ah, monsieur, I have found you, *dieu merci* ! I feared you were not here, you are Monsieur Le Capitain Tregannon !”

Though greatly surprised, our hero replied in the affirmative.

The insurgents stood resting and leaning on their muskets, gazing calmly upon the two young men. They were evidently struck with the appearance of the English Captain, as youthful as their own leader, taller and more powerfully built, but both remarkably handsome.

“Well, Monsieur,” said Henri de la Rochejaquelein, giving his name to our hero. “I am happy to tell you, you and your countrymen are free. I promised a fair maiden—a countrywoman of yours,” he added, with a smile, “to set you free, and La Rochejaquelein has kept his word.”

“Heavens!” exclaimed Claude Tregannon, pressing warmly the hand freely held out to him. “Do you mean a young lady captured in an English vessel, with a French lady named D’Arblay?”

“The same,” said the French leader, “but we must not loiter here, I will explain another time. General Queteneau is within three leagues, with a force of eight thousand men, and I have only two hundred. Your countrymen are in the court-yard, so let us go.”

“May I request a favour, Monsieur,” said Claude, “these people, the jailor and his wife, showed me some kindness. I hope—.”

“Oh, they are quite safe,” returned the

young leader, "but they must get out of this place, with their effects, as fast as they can, as I intend burning it to the ground. There go and be quick," he said, turning to the rejoiced jailor and his wife, "if there is any thing you can carry out with you, take it, we are not plunderers. Arms and ammunition are all we seek; we have gained a good store here."

Mr. Fleetwood and Claude, both burning with impatience to hear more of their beloved Fanny, followed La Rochejaquelein into the court-yard of the prison. Numerous torches threw a light over a scene too often witnessed in civil wars. Numbers of the garrison of Doué prison lay dead upon the ground, together with several of the Vendéans, and nearly three hundred men, including the revolutionary soldiers and insurgents, crowded the yard; some busy assisting the wounded, others collecting arms and ammunition to carry away. Amongst them were the English sailors

captured in the Water Witch ; they at once crowded round our hero, wishing him joy, and in great spirits at regaining, so very unexpectedly, their liberty. Claude's old friend, Mr. Seabright, was well and hearty and shook him fervently by the hand.

In half an hour all were ready for departure, the dead Vendéans were carried out to be buried, and the wounded placed upon two waggons found in the prison. Several horses were in the stables, these were great prizes. La Rochejaquelein ordered two of them to be saddled and bridled for the use of our hero and Mr. Fleetwood. The place was then set on fire, and the whole party, in less than an hour, were on march for St. Florent, the flames from the burning prison illuminating their path. It was broad day light when the Vendéans entered the town, where the whole of La Rochejaquelein's force was quartered.

The young royalist leader, and our hero, during the four hours' march, had become

quite friendly. La Rochejaquelein related the manner in which he had encountered Madame D'Arblay and Fanny, and his promise to the latter of releasing the prisoners.

"I think, Monsieur Tregannon," continued the Vendean, "that your best plan will be to send your men to the Island of Noirmontiers where they will be perfectly safe, and ready on the first opportunity to embark for England, and your friend Monsieur Fleetwood had better accompany them. I know," he added, smiling, "that you will not leave this country till you carry your beautiful betrothed with you. I will help you to accomplish that desirable event with all my heart and soul, for I do not consider she is safe in the power of such a man as Colonel D'Arblay, one of the most ferocious and bloodthirsty of the revolutionary leaders. However, we will talk over this in the evening. There is an excellent auberge at St. Florent, and any funds you may require, I can let you have."

Claude warmly thanked the generous La Rochejaquelein, who also informed him that he was about to join forces with Monsieur D'Elbee, an experienced commander, and who had all the parishes around Chollet and Bois-Priau under him. That their intention was to march upon Bressure, where General Queteneau then was.

On reaching St. Florent, Mr. Fleetwood and our hero took up their quarters at the Hotel Louis D'Or, and provided for the released prisoners in the town, all the inhabitants being willing to aid the Vendean Royalists.

Mr. Fleetwood, feeling somewhat fatigued, retired early to rest. La Rochejaquelein in the course of the evening explained to our hero why he considered Miss Fleetwood in rather a perilous situation, should Colonel D'Arblay rejoin his wife. In the first place," he said, "he is a furious Revolutionist, and of the worst class. Thirsting for the blood of the entire royal family; he is also known to be

connected with a woman whose principles are notoriously vicious, and a fast friend of the terrible Robespierre ; he is now a needy man, and unscrupulous how he obtains gold—so he does obtain it.”

As the whole district round Chateau Bois-Philibert was up in arms against the Republic, it would be safe and easy, the Vendean thought, for Claude Tregannon, speaking the language as he did, with the few men he would spare him, to proceed to the Chateau and rescue Miss Fleetwood from all peril that she might incur by remaining with madame, who could not know the terrible character her husband had gained during her absence from him. He would furnish him with letters to General Charette who held the Marais and the Isle Noirmontiers, with a force of nearly twenty thousand men. From thence it would be easy to embark for England.

This plan of operation completely agreed with Claude Tregannon's wishes ; but as his generous

friend was resolved to advance upon St. Fulgent the next day, and drive out of it one thousand two hundred Republicans said to be stationed there, he begged to be allowed to accompany him in that expedition, and the road being open, and the entire district freed from the enemy, he would then pursue his way for the Chateau. It would give the men who were to accompany him an opportunity of judging how willing he was to fight in their cause. La Rochejaquelein grasped the Englishman's hand with a bright smile, saying—

“That will give me greater pleasure than any thing you could do ; it will, as you say, please my men who so willingly stormed Doué Prison to free you. Keep your intention from Mr. Fleetwood for fear he should feel uneasy, and we had better get him to leave to-morrow. I can procure a calech for Olone, where he will have excellent quarters, till you join him.”

It was late when the two young men separated ; the next day Claude having commu-

nicated his project of proceeding in search of Madame D'Arblay and Fanny, after a time persuaded Mr. Fleetwood, who was at his age and bodily health unable to undergo so much fatigue, to proceed at once in a calech with Mr. Seabright, furnished with letters to Olone, where he hoped to join him in a few days with Fanny and her attendant Hannah.

"I trust in God, you will succeed, my son," said Mr. Fleetwood, affectionately embracing Claude, "I shall wait in great anxiety your arrival; be very careful and cautious."

After Mr. Fleetwood's departure Claude called his crew together, and told them that he would send them on to Olone, or the Isle Noirmontiers, and that he hoped to join them there in a few days; but having been so gallantly set free by the Royalists, he was resolved to strike one blow on their side before he left them.

With a loud cheer, every one of the Water Witch's crew threw their hats in the air,

shouting with all their might, 'success to the Vendéans'—declaring they would, every man jack of them, follow their Captain, and have a brush with the revolutionists on land, to make up for their defeat on the sea. They vowed they would make a flag for themselves before morning, and they would like to see any d—revolutionist that could make them strike it.

When the Vendean insurgents heard this, for it was repeated to them by their leader, a universal embracing took place, and a remarkably convivial evening ensued. It was certainly curious how soon the British sailor contrived to make himself understood. Before morning every man had a sash and cockade, a musket, a cutlass, and pistol; the entire force of La Rochejaquelein was unencumbered with baggage, for in the singular war of La Vendée the peasantry, who would never remain long from their homes, carried with them only bread and provision for a few days, the several parishes they passed through supplying them

with what they required. Every man amongst the Vendean army was a splendid marksman, using his gun with a deadly certainty, and always favoured by the nature of the country, intersected as it was by thick and impervious hedges. From behind these they generally attacked their enemies, and knowing the country intimately, it was impossible to pursue them, should they think fit to retreat during the night.

Henri De La Rochejaquelein had received intelligence during the night that General Marce with twelve hundred men, partly troops of the line, and a portion from the national guard, had left Saint Vincent and was marching upon St. Fulgent and had added nine pieces of cannon to his force ; La Rochejaquelein therefore resolved to attack General Marce, selecting a place where the nature of the country gave him immense advantage.

Marching before day break, the Vendean

leader posted his men behind some rising grounds and impervious hedges, and then waited the approach of the republican army. Claude Tregannon, furnished with a sash, a cockade, and a handsome rifle and sabre, had marched by the side of La Rochejaquelein conversing, and greatly excited and inspired by the heroic courage displayed by a parcel of undisciplined peasants, going to attack a formidable body of disciplined troops, well armed and protected by artillery; and yet, each man felt as confident of victory, and as easy and cheerful as if marching to a bridal. Our hero, who did not presume to give an opinion, beheld with astonishment the admirable manner in which this young and inexperienced soldier posted his men, so that the force of General Marce would be exposed to a murderous fire from the Vendicans without being able to use their artillery.

It was after two o'clock in the afternoon before General Marce's army came in sight; he

had stopped to re-build a bridge, the Vendéans had nearly destroyed. The moment selected for opening their fire arrived, and at a signal from their leader, a murderous one was poured in upon the astonished revolutionists from all sides. Unable to attack an enemy concealed behind rising ground and hedges, the Republican army wavered—another destructive volley completed the panic; and as General Marce's men broke and divided, the signal was given, and with a loud triumphant cheer, the Vendéans rushed down upon the Republicans, who, after a short but fierce conflict, turned and fled, leaving their artillery in the hands of the victors.

In the fury of the onset the Vendean leader was struck to the ground by a tall officer, who, raising his sword, was about to dispatch his enemy, when Claude, who followed close upon his steps, rushed in and caught the blow on his own sword, and not wishing to kill the man he closed with him, and catching him as

a Cornish wrestler does his antagonist, lifted him up and hurled him over on the sod—little thinking his antagonist was General Marce.

“That’s repaying me, *mon ami*, in good earnest,” said La Rochejaquelein to our hero, as he helped him up, a little stunned, “I owe you my life.”

A few minutes more and the contest was over, the enemy having dispersed and fled in every direction. This was considered at the period a very brilliant affair, as the Vendéans lost only a few men, and captured nine pieces of cannon and a great quantity of arms and ammunition.

The crew of the “Water Witch” enjoyed the affair amazingly, capturing several of the enemy besides taking General Marce’s own baggage and the flag of the regiment as their individual spoil; no prisoners, however, were ever retained; depriving them of their arms and accoutrements, they were set free.

After this exploit, La Rochejaquelein and his

men returned to their quarters, all enthusiastic in their admiration of their English allies. A day or two after, the crew of the "Water Witch" left with several guides for the Isle of Noirmontiers, where they were to wait for their young commander for a few days, but if at that time he did not join them, they were to take the first opportunity of embarking for England. One young man, a native of Lyme Regis, for whom our hero had a great partiality, begged most earnestly that he might remain behind and attend on him; this man was in the yacht when our hero saved Miss Fleetwood's life, and had gallantly leaped overboard to assist him in doing so.

Tom Starling was a fine, good-looking man, full of strength, life, and spirits, and the favourite of all on board the "Surinam," on the voyage out, and a great favourite of Miss Fleetwood's. On their return, in the action with the "Legere," when the corvette's crew boarded the "Water Witch," Tom Starling

followed our hero like a shadow, fought by his side inch by inch, and would have sacrificed his life ten times over to save his commander's. Tom's petition, therefore, was gladly granted.

While La Rochejaquelein was corresponding with and receiving messengers from the other chiefs of the insurrection, and preparing for a grand junction of their forces, Claude Tregannon prepared for his expedition to the Chateau Bois-Philibert. After consulting together, both our hero and La Rochejaquelein were of opinion that he had better proceed to the Chateau, accompanied only by Tom Starling and an experienced guide. There was no danger of an enemy; he had received secret intelligence that Colonel D'Arblay was still with General Queteneau and his dragoons. Furnished with a letter from La Rochejaquelein, and backed by the instructions of the able guide he would send with him, should he want any assistance, he could raise a score of men in any of the hamlets of the district.

Attired similiary to the Vendean soldiers, with sash and cockade, our hero would anywhere be well received, for the feeling against the republic was universal from Nantes to the Isle of Noirmontiers, all over the district called the sands, through Airvault, St. Florent, to the banks of the Loire, as well as the vast track called the "Marais."

Accordingly, two days after the battle with General Marce, Claude Tregannon and Tom Starling, well mounted and armed, left the army. The parting of the two young men was most affectionate. La Rochejaquelein felt their separation exceedingly, for he had conceived quite a brotherly feeling for the preserver of his life.

"When you reach Noirmontiers with your affianced," said the Vendean leader, "send a messenger to me, and, if alive and well, I will spare a day or two to bid you both farewell; but should any unforeseen accident occur—for we cannot foresee what is before us—to pre-

vent your seeing mademoiselle, and taking her from the Chateau, return to me, and I will aid you with all my power."

Claude Tregannon felt extremely the generous and noble conduct of the young leader, and most fervently trusted that he might prosper in the good and royal cause he had embraced; and thus they parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOM STARLING, like all sailors, was a reckless but indifferent horseman. For the first ten miles of their road, he tried all imaginable positions on the animal he bestrode; he, at first, disliked the bow of his craft, as he styled the head of his horse; the animal had spirit, and tossed his neck, and, as Tom perched himself well forward, he, at times, came in contact with the head.

“He pitches and heaves,” growled Tom, after a hard knock, “as if he was making head way

in a cross sea. I'm blowed if I don't face the stern," he muttered to himself as he rode behind his master, and to the great amusement of the guide. Tom tacked, as he had said, and faced the stern. This unusual method surprised the horse so much, that he kicked violently, on which Tom vociferated—"Avast heaving, you lubber—and I'll sit amid ships to please you."

Our hero looked round, hearing the voice of Tom, just as the latter, in shifting his position, came to the ground.

"Why, Tom, you have lost the command of your craft," said Claude Tregannon, as the sailor regained his legs, laughing good humouredly—the French guide highly amused, though rather astounded at Tom's proceedings.

"There's no pleasing her, your honour," said Tom; "I've tried her fore and aft, starboard and larboard—she's as uneasy as a lass going to be spliced."

“Change with our guide,” said our hero ;
“his mule seems very quiet.”

“I don’t like them ere craft, sir—they’re not ship shape—neither one thing or another—I’d rather stick to this here lively one—I’ll take a haul on the shrouds, and may be she’ll work easier.”

So saying, he so shortened his stirrups that his knees were level with the pommel of the saddle ; but that seemed to please Tom exceedingly, and, with a long speech to his French companion, who nodded his head, saying—
“*Oui, oui, c’est bon,*” they proceeded.

Their first day’s journey was through a very peculiar country.

Halting for the night at Landri, the guide picked up a piece of intelligence, from some peasants who came into the hamlet in the evening, that would force them to make a considerable detour to reach Chateau Bois-Philibert. The peasant averred that General Queteneau had sent Colonel D’Arblay, with his

regiment of dragoons into that district, and also that two regiments of infantry were direct in their route. This intelligence, if true, was greatly against their project, and rendered our hero extremely uneasy. On consulting with his guide, the man said, he could take him by another road, longer certainly, but by fording the Isaure and crossing the hills, they could reach Saint Morent before evening, and that hamlet was within three leagues of Bois-Philibert.

Accordingly, they set out early in the morning, and going, at a smart pace, over an execrable road, and through a country thickly intersected with hedge-rows and much timber, about three o'clock in the day, they reached the top of a rising ground looking down into the vale through which ran the Isaure. As they rode down the descent, Claude Tregannon, who was some way a-head, perceived, coming along the valley towards the river, several

persons on horseback ; the distance was yet too great to make them out, but he thought he caught the sparkle of steel accoutrements of a horse soldier, and the next moment some white garments amidst the group. Halting his horse behind a clump of trees, and holding up his hand to those behind, he waited till the group came out into the broad road through the valley, so that he might make them out distinctly. His guide, a stout, able young man, anxiously watched the party.

“They are dragoons, Monsieur—four in number.”

“Yes,” interrupted Claude Tregannon, with considerable excitement of manner ; “and there are two females in the midst of them on small horses or mules, and a man on foot. By Heavens, something strikes me that the females may be Madame D’Arblay and Miss Fleetwood.”

Tom Starling heard the names, though he

did not understand the sentence ; drawing his cutlass, he exclaimed—

“Heave a head, your honour, and let us pitch into them before they see our colours—there’s only four.”

“Stay a moment—stay a moment—be cool and quiet, Tom,” said Claude ; “I see now, plainly enough, they are dragoons, and that the females are on mules—the foremost rider is an officer ; he may be Madame D’Arblay’s husband, therefore it will not do to rashly attack them ; in five minutes or so we shall be able to distinguish the females.”

In a few minutes they were close under them, and Tom suddenly exclaimed—

“By the pipers, that’s Mrs. Hannah on the near mule, and that’s the young mistress as sure as a gun, on the starboard side. Wont I board that tall fellow in the moustache beside Mrs. Hannah,” muttered Tom, settling himself for a charge, and eager to commence hostilities.

"I can take down that foremost horseman from here," said the Vendean guide, unslinging his rifle; "he's a dragoon of D'Arblay's blood-thirsty regiment."

"Nay, hold your hand, Gourtrand," said our hero; "the females are those we seek; but whether that tall man is madame's husband or not I cannot say; but we must not shoot him, for madame's sake, without seeing whether it is or not. Now follow me."

And, with a palpitating heart, he rode rapidly down the hill. The noise of the horse's hoofs first attracted the notice of the dragoons, who slightly checked their speed; the next moment they were within a hundred yards of them.

The officer who rode in front instantly drew a pistol from his holster, whilst the three dragoons in the rear, with their short muskets resting in the case by the muzzle, pulled them out, but as they did so, the sharp report of a rifle was heard, and instantly one

of the dragoon horses was freed from its rider, who fell to the ground mortally wounded. A wild cry from Fanny Fleetwood, for it was she, as she attempted to turn her mule, satisfied our hero that they were captives to the dragoons, but before he could reach them, the officer, who was mounted on a splendid charger, spurred alongside the startled mule, grasped Fanny round the waist, despite her struggles and shrieks, lifted her on to his saddle, and then spurred on furiously for the ford over the Isure.

With a shout of intense rage and vexation, Claude Tregannon rode after the dragoon, whilst, with the shock of a wild bull, Tom Starling, cutlass in hand, came, as he styled it, stem on with one of the dragoons, who fired his carbine within a yard of his head without effect; the next instant he and the dragoon were rolling on the ground, grappling each other in desperate contest, whilst the fourth dragoon turned and fled.

Our hero was well mounted—his horse, a strong, fleet animal, went over the ground at a killing pace—he was within a hundred yards of the rapid and dangerous ford of the Isure, and not fifty yards behind the fugitive officer, when the latter turned in his saddle, and fired his pistol at his pursuer: the ball tore the cockade from his hat, but on they went, Claude gaining on the dragoon. Without hesitation, the fugitive dashed into the rapid stream—but by this time Claude was within ten yards, and could have shot his horse dead, but feared he might injure Fanny in the fall. The officer turned, and, seeing he would be caught, suddenly grasping the shrieking girl round the body, hurled her into the rapid stream, shouting at the top of his voice—

“Curse you, I know you, but I’ll have my revenge yet.”

Brief and rapid as was the glance, Claude Tregannon recognized the face of the dragoon, and saw that it was his mortal enemy, William

Thornback. He bestowed not a thought upon him, but with a pang, impossible to describe, he beheld his beloved Fanny sink beneath the current. The next instant he had abandoned his horse and plunged into the stream after her. Though shallow at the ford, the Isure was a deep and very rapid stream. As Fanny rose to the surface, Claude reached her side and grasped her round the body, and then keeping her well up, swam with the stream. His guide having come up, threw himself off his horse, and ran along the bank, watching for a place and an opportunity to rush in and aid the almost exhausted Claude. Happily, a bend in the stream on the side the guide was, enabled our hero to make an effort for gaining the bank. Wading in up to his waist, the guide grasped Claude Tregannon's extended hand, and in a minute more, our hero bore his loved, but senseless burthen up the bank.

As he did so, a young lad, urging on a mule on which sat Hannah, reached the spot;

the terrified and attached young woman threw herself from the mule, and ran to the assistance of her mistress, in a state of mind not to be described.

Leaving our hero and the rest to recover Fanny, who had a most perilous escape, we must follow, for a while, the proceedings of Tom Starling. Having knocked his antagonist senseless, with the heavy butt of one of his pistols, he contrived to mount his horse again, and ride after his master with might and main, uttering various strange expressions to his startled steed, which happened to be a remarkably fast one.

“Now then, you lubber, crack on,” shouted Tom, as his eyes were intently fixed on his commander and the flying dragoon, with difficulty keeping himself on the saddle. However, he arrived in time to witness the dragoon throwing Miss Fleetwood into the stream, and Claude dashing in after her ; furious with rage, Tom plunged in, shouting to the dragoon, who, after tossing into the stream, the unfortunate

girl, to stop the pursuit of his enemy, pursued his way ; but his horse had evidently hurt his fore foot amongst the huge stones in the ford. Tom, half soaked in wet, and half off his horse, still pursued, grasping both saddle and bridle with one hand, and flourishing his cutlass with the other, and shouting to the fugitive to douse his topsails and heave to.

William Thornback, convulsed with rage and vexation, defeated perpetually by the man he detested, and forced to fly while thirsting for revenge, hearing the shouts of the sailor behind him, exclaimed, with an oath of savage passion—

“Curse that fool, I’ll brain him for his pains, or else I shall lame my horse before I get out of this scrape.”

Drawing another pistol from his holster, he drew in his steed and wheeled round, but fortune was against the villain, or rather Providence had resolved that the ruffian’s career should end now and for ever. The pistol missed fire,

and Tom, with a wild cheer, dashed headlong at his enemy in the same manner as before, hurling Captain Thornback and his horse to the ground, his own beast reeling and staggering with the shock, and panting from over exertion, also fell; before Tom could rise, Captain Thornback had extricated himself from his fallen steed, and savage and exasperated rushed, with his drawn sabre, to slay his pursuer; but Tom, though he lay sprawling on his back, with one foot entangled in the stirrups, put his hand into his breast, and pulled out his pistol, having thrust it in there for want of his sash, which had been torn from him in his previous struggle, and fired full in the face of his enemy, just as he raised his sabre to slay him.

It was a deadly shot, the ball shattering his lower jaw, and mortally wounding him.

“Curse you, you coward,” shouted Tom, “that’s settled your reckoning for you, you villain; to try and drown my young mistress.”

William Thornback, with a terrible groan of agony, staggered back and fell prostrate on the sod, while Tom very quietly commenced extricating his foot. Having worked himself free, he rose up, shook himself to ascertain that his bones were all right, and then advanced towards his enemy, whom he perceived struggling to get at something. The blood was streaming from his jaw, and he was evidently dying, and yet he had struggled to unlose his coat, and was pulling a clasped pocket-book from the interior. When Tom reached his side he had the leather case in his hand, and was making a vain effort to open it. Raising his glassy eyes, he looked into Tom Starling's face, and holding his shattered jaw with one hand, he murmured, in a very indistinct voice—

“ You have killed me—in a few minutes I shall cease to live ; if you do not want me to curse you, open this case and let me have the papers inside.”

Tom started back electrified, on hearing his own language; he grew pale and felt frightened, wondering if he had slain a wrong man, but then recollecting the act the man had committed, and his intention of taking his own life, he consoled himself; willing to oblige the dying man in so small a matter, he took the leather case, untied the silk fastening, and opened the clasp; and perceiving that it contained only four or five papers, he was on the point of handing them to the struggling, agonized wretch, lying at his feet, when the single word Tregannon, on one of the papers, caught Tom's eye; he drew back his hand. William Thornback writhed in agony.

"Give them—give them villain—curse you—oh."

His hand fell from his jaw, the blood poured forth, a struggle, and then he rolled over on his face a corpse.

"Oh! curse away; curses hurt nobody," said Tom Starling; "these papers may be of

use to my master—let's see if he has anything else—all fair in war. Who the deuce can he be?" and Tom very deliberately overhauled the enemy, finding two letters, a purse of gold Louis, and a worn passport.

As he turned round to look for his horse, he perceived, making right for the ford of the Isure, a large party of dragoons in full gallop. Tom now thought his reckoning was run out. To get on horseback and fly was out of the question, but seeing a high thick hedge within fifty yards of him, he ran for it, and with a violent effort, squeezed himself through. Similar thick, high hedges bounded all the fields on the side of the hill, so continuing along another, he came to a row of beech trees, up one of these he climbed with all the agility of a sailor, and settling himself on a stout leafy bough, he could see through the leaves, the spot where he had left the dead dragoon officer.

Looking back, he saw twenty or thirty men

riding up from the ford, but as he anxiously inspected them, he could see clearly enough neither his master or either of the females were with them. Though this relieved his mind, it excessively astonished him ; how was it possible that they escaped the party he was gazing at.

In a few minutes the dragoons halted by the side of their dead officer, and a dozen of the men sprung from their saddles. Some raised the body, whilst others began searching the bushes and hedges, but did not seem inclined to push their way through. Whilst Tom was thus gazing at their proceedings, he was absolutely confounded by seeing a long range of smoke burst from behind one of the distant hedges on the opposite side of the road, while, at the same moment, a sharp volley of musketry pealed through the air. Four of the dragoons bit the dust, rolling off their horses mortally wounded, while several of the horses, struck by the balls, became mad with pain

and ungovernable. An instantaneous panic seized the rest; they knew, from experience, that they could not reach their invisible foes, ambushed behind those almost impervious hedges, therefore leaping into their saddles and placing the body of their slain commander across his own horse, they retreated towards the ford, but not before another volley emptied three more of the saddles, the horses flying wildly over the road. In a few minutes they had re-crossed the ford, and continued their flight along the road they had just come up by. Such was generally the result of all contests between the revolutionary cavalry and the Vendéans.

Tom Starling now beheld about twenty or more armed peasants come out from behind the hedge, and pushing their way through a part known to themselves, ran down to rifle the dead and dying dragoons.

“My eyes and limbs,” said Tom, “perhaps as I cannot manage their lingo they may shoot

me, and I have lost my cockade. Confound that rascal that shot off my truck."

Grumbling and muttering to himself, yet still exceedingly anxious concerning his master and Miss Fleetwood, Tom descended the tree, and very resolutely approached the armed peasants, who were scientifically stripping the dead dragoons of their arms, ammunition, and accoutrements. Squeezing himself through the hedge, he advanced towards the men, who saw him approaching without evincing any surprise, or even desisting from their occupation. One of the insurgents, a handsome man of some five or six and twenty years, attired in a dark green hunting suit, with the Vendean sash and cockade, was standing leaning on a handsome-stocked rifle, regarding the men collecting the arms. He looked up, as Tom Starling came on, and held out his hand, saying—

"Ah, mon ami, tu es brave garçon."

Tom took the hand held out to him in his

large muscular paw, giving it a squeeze that caused the Frenchman to exclaim, "*diable*," while Tom, in reply, said—

"Aigh, aigh, my hearties, here I am, Tom Starling at your sarvice. Curse me if I understand one word that you say."

At this address in English, the whole party turned sharp round, and gazed with astonishment at Tom. But their leader, the man in the green hunting suit, burst into a hearty laugh, saying to his men—

"This is one of the English that La Rochejaquelein took out of the prison of Doué, and who behaved so gallantly fighting against General Marce's force, but how the *diable* to make him understand me I can't think, or what brought him here in pursuit of that dragoon officer he shot."

Tom rubbed his head hard as he listened to this long speech, not understanding a word of it, but mustering up all the French he knew,

he turned to the gentleman, for gentleman he certainly was, in green, and said—

“*Parlez vous English?*”

“No, *mon ami*, no. *Sacra Dieu!—Gott dam—voilà tous.*”

And he burst into a hearty laugh.

“Well, blow me,” growled Tom, “if I ain’t in a fix, like a craft in irons.”

A sudden exclamation, however, from one of the men caused Tom to look round, when, to his infinite joy and amazement he beheld his master and the French guide, Gourtrand, walking rapidly up from the river towards them.

“Ha, ha, Monsieur Gott Dam,” said Tom, “here’s my master, we shall get into ship shape directly, but I wonder where the women are stowed away.”

Claude Tregannon with all the appearance of having undergone a thorough soaking, came rapidly up, saying to Tom Starling who ran towards him—

“Well, Tom, I am rejoiced to see you safe and sound. I was alarmed when I heard you had pursued that villain; would to God I could have followed him.”

“By the pipers of war, your honour,” said Tom with a quiet smile, “his log is run out, anyhow.”

“How,” said our hero with a start and flushed cheek, “do you mean to say you killed him!”

“Upon my soul, sir, I boarded him stem on, and sent him clean over on his beam ends, but my own craft heeled over with the shock, and left me high and dry, like a turtle on its back, with my starboard leg jammed in the rigging; as he came up with his sword lifted to scuttle me, I shot him through the jaw; but here’s the captain of those men coming to speak to you—please, sir, where’s Miss Fleetwood?”

“Safe, thank God! and not much the

worse for the cowardly act of that desperate villain."

The leader of the peasants saluted our hero, saying—

"Captain Tregannon, I presume; my name is De Lescure; I am a cousin of La Rochejaquelein, and shall be most happy to serve you in any way I can."

Claude held out his hand, and shaking the Vendean chief's warmly said—

"I shall have reason all my life to remember La Vendee, for I have experienced the greatest kindness and generosity from its inhabitants. How came you, monsieur, to know me so immediately?"

"Oh, that's easily accounted for!" returned the Frenchman with a smile, "two days ago a messenger from my cousin Henri reached me with letters; he mentioned your intention of going through this district to Chateau Bois-Philibert, and spoke in terms of affection of

you and how bitterly he regretted your departure. I had heard of you before, monsieur, and of your gallantry, and that of your men in fighting General Marce's division; from Henri's description, there was no mistaking you at a glance—but, how is this; you are dripping wet, you must have taken a wrong ford of the Isure."

"Oh, no, monsieur!" replied Claude, "I had a pretty good dose of the river, but I have a lady to attend to not far off, and I am thinking those dragoons you drove away may return in greater force."

"Ah, *Mon Dieu*, I understand; you have succeeded in rescuing the young lady from Chateau Bois-Philibert. As to the dragoons there is little fear of cavalry in this kind of country; I was aware that D'Arblay's force, and two regiments of infantry were marched into these parishes, and that that blood-thirsty revolutionist had committed great excesses. They say there is an Englishman, a captain in

his troop, a perfect devil in wickedness and ferocity."

"Yes," returned our hero, "I knew him well, he was shot by this man, one of my crew. It was his body you saw carried off by his men."

"*Ah, Dieu merci!*" exclaimed Monsieur De Lescure with great vivacity, "your man is a brave garçon and shall not go without reward. Come here my man," he continued, motioning Tom Starling to approach, which he did with his usual smile on his face, "will you tell this fine fellow," said Monsieur De Lescure taking a very handsome gold watch from his pocket and handing it to Tom, who looked amazed—"That I give him this for two reasons: first, that it may remind him of us poor Royalists, who are fighting to maintain our national freedom, and the rights of our religion, our king, and our seignors. I do not offer him gold, in the second place, because it is scarce with us, and what we can get we

spend in arms and ammunition ; he is a brave fellow and has rid us of one devil, at all events."

When our hero explained this to Tom he took the watch with great reverence, and then lugging out the purse full of gold he had taken from William Thornback he handed it to Claude, saying—

" Well, your honour, I am dumfounded—taken all aback—my jaw tackle at the best of times, being none of the clearest ; tell his honour I will keep the watch as long as I live, and if ever I get spliced, which in course I will if I lives and my girl holds on, I will leave the watch to what your honour would call your ancestors, or posterities, or some such long shore word ; and that in return I beg that this gold, which I took from the enemy, may be distributed amongst the men, and so your honour here's long life and success to the Vendean," and Tom made a remarkable bow all round.

Claude translated this speech of Tom's, smiling as he did so; and notwithstanding all Monsieur De Lescure could do or say, Tom was resolute, so the gold was actually divided between the peasants to buy powder and drink Tom's health, which they vowed they would do that night in a bumper.

In about an hour Fanny Fleetwood and her attendant, Hannah, remounted their mules, the former having changed her dripping garments, Hannah having fortunately packed up in her bundle a change or two, and were pursuing their way to Landri, escorted by Monsieur Lescure and his men. Claude Tregannon and Tom Starling having, with the assistance of the guide, caught their horses—rode by their side—Tom entertaining Hannah with the account of his exploit.

As they proceed we will explain to our readers how Fanny fell into the hands of Captain Thornback, and how Claude Tregannon after rescuing her from the rapid stream of the

Isure, contrived to escape the pursuit and search of the dragoons.

After leaving the village of Saint Morent, our heroine pursued her journey, guided over the intricate road across the mountain by Ambroise; on descending, about mid-day, into the plain on the other side, they halted for an hour at a small hamlet; when the good-natured woman in whose cottage they stopped to refresh the mules, for there was no auberge in the place, heard that they intended sleeping that night at Iandri, she said—

“You can do so, certainly, but if you are seeking to avoid the revolutionary soldiers, as the lad who is guiding you says you are, you cannot go through Drouet, for they say there is a great number of troops quartered there waiting for some colonel to join them with his dragoons. You had better cross this valley and get into the road leading through the valley of the Isure, over which there is a

ford, which you can't miss as there is a huge post marking the place."

The mere mention of revolutionary soldiers frightened Hannah, and indeed her mistress; so they resolved to proceed, though it was three leagues further to go through the Isure, instead of sleeping at Landri, which was much too near to the revolutionists.

Now this piece of information inducing them to go out of their way, though it saved them from General Marce's fugitive soldiers, threw them into the power of Captain Thornback.

Their flight from the Chateau Bois-Philibert was not discovered till after six o'clock in the morning, thus giving them four hours' start of the enraged Captain Thornback, who had actually determined to force Fanny Fleetwood to become his wife, thereby inflicting a fearful vengeance on Claude Tregannon.

The flight of Fanny made the Captain furious. Knowing that the whole country through

which she would doubtless proceed was in favour of the insurrection, with Colonel D'Arblay's sanction, he ordered fifty men of the regiment to follow him as speedily as they could, whilst he with three of his men mounted and took the way to Saint Morent.

Though they denied all knowledge of the fugitives at the Auberge, William Thornback was too keen a pursuer, and too accustomed to all kinds of stratagems not to be wide awake to every sign and token.

On a minute examination of the premises, and the people of the Auberge, he became satisfied the fugitives had been there a few hours before; so seizing an unfortunate lad who was a helper in the stables, he ordered his men to tie him up and flog him till he declared which way the two females had gone. The poor boy, after the first blow had been inflicted, declared the truth; and Captain Thornback with a grin of triumph and a frightful curse at the two trembling girls, Rose and

Janette, remounted his horse, swearing that on his return he would burn the house.

Continuing his way over the mountain he lost sometime by being imperfectly guided by one of his men ; still he reached the little hamlet two hours after the departure of Miss Fleetwood and Hannah. The same threats forced the inhabitants to say that the fugitives had been there, and that they had continued their road to Landri. So far they spoke the truth, but they did not say that they had taken another road, much longer and quite contrary, as it appeared, to the way they ought to go ; Captain Thornback pushed on three leagues without overtaking them, and meeting some women on the road, he enquired, in a very civil manner, whether they had met two females on mules ; they replied that they had not, although they had come all the way from Landri. He felt he had been deceived, or he must have overtaken them earlier, at the rate he rode

In doubt what to do, he pulled up, when one of his men informed him there was a road from the last hamlet, that led through the valley of the Isure. He retraced his way to the hamlet, where he met a score of his troopers just riding in.

Again he tried his cruel experiment of flogging; a poor boy who was frightened out of his senses by his brutal treatment, and who had seen the party pass, directed him to the road they had taken. This delay saved the fugitives, for had he overtaken them one half hour sooner, Claude Tregannon would not have arrived to their rescue, or Monsieur Lescure have heard the shots that arrested him in his march to join the force of Monsieur D'Elbee.

Having overtaken our heroine and Hannab, to their infinite horror and disgust; Captain Thornback determined to continue their route over the Isure and regain the road, and thus get back by another to the Chateau Bois-

Philibert, fearing that many of the peasants in the hamlets he had passed through, might, in revenge for the treatment he had used towards the young lad and the girl, lie in ambush and shoot down his men. Thus he ended his career by dreading the consequences of his own cruelty.

Claude Tregannon, in saving Fanny from the waters of the Isure, was carried nearly half a mile down the rapid stream before he could, with the guide's assistance, gain the bank. This, as it happened, was a most fortunate circumstance, for, within fifty yards of the spot, was a shepherd's hut, and the man, who was close by, watching his herd, ran to his assistance in carrying her to the hut.

Anxious to ascertain the fate of his man, Tom Starling, whom the guide informed him had pursued the dragoon officer, they proceeded along the banks of the river. As they walked rapidly on, they heard the tramp of the troop of dragoons coming along the hard road leading

to the ford of the Isure. The dragoon who had fled, having encountered his comrades coming slowly along the road, brought them back to the assistance of his captain.

When Claude and the guide heard the tramp of horses, they crouched down behind the bank, and beheld the men pass the ford, and shortly after, as they climbed to the top of the bank, they heard the volley of musketry from the Vendean rifles, and beheld the retreat of the dragoons with the dead body of their captain.

Having thus explained the capture of Miss Fleetwood, and the consequences following it, we shall resume our story in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

MONSIEUR DE LESCURE escorted Claude Treganon and his fair companion to the town of Laudri, where they found an excellent hotel, in which he left them, saying—

“ You will now have no difficulty or trouble in reaching the Isle of Noirmontier, for the entire country from this place to Olone is in our hands, and not a republican soldier in the whole district. You have your letters from my cousin Henri safe in your possession, so that you will receive every assistance from

Monsieur Charette, who is at the head of twenty thousand men. Should you not be able to get to some English vessel of war off the coast, he will, no doubt, procure you a craft to take you to England, and I trust in God, that your government will assist us with the arms and ammunition they promised."

"Most sincerely do I trust they will," warmly responded Claude.

Having seen that his beloved, and now happy Fanny, had everything she required, Claude's next care was to reward Ambroise for the courage he had shown, and the manner in which he had supported the drooping spirits of the females when overtaken by Thornback. Having performed this duty, he proceeded in search of a carriage in which to resume their journey on the following day. Tom Starling no sooner found his master disengaged, than he took from his pocket the leather case, saying—

"Here, your honour, is part of the spoil I took from that rascally English traitor I shot.

He wanted me to give him the papers inside to destroy ; and so, your honour, I would have done, but you see, the villain was forced to hold his broken jaw with one hand, so he asked me to open the case for him, which I did, and as I looked at the papers inside, I saw your honour's name."

"Good God, Tom," interrupted Claude, with considerable agitation of manner, "this case may contain a paper for which I would willingly pay a thousand pounds. If so, your fortune is made;" and, taking the case from the astounded sailor, he hurried up to his chamber, burning with anxiety to examine the contents, while Tom Starling kept repeating—

"One thousand pounds! My eyes and limbs, what kind of a piece of paper can it be? One thousand pounds! By the pipers of war, I'll splice with Poll the moment I gets back to Lyme Regis. There's a wedding I'll have—two post-chaises for Poll and myself, four fidlers in another! and, shiver my timbers, what a

dinner, and oceans of grog, I and my old comrades will swallow."

So inspired was Tom Starling with these ideas, that heaving his hat in the air, he gave such a hearty cheer as startled every inmate of the hotel, the host and hostess rushing out to see what could be the matter.

Our hero having reached his chamber, drew his chair to the table, and commenced an examination of the contents of William Thornback's pocket book, but anxious, intensely anxious as he was to peruse the papers, he was not then, nor for many a day afterwards, destined to know what it contained, for scarcely had he unclasped the case, when a violent uproar and tumult in the streets, beneath his window, followed by a sharp rattle of musketry, caused him to start from his seat ; alarmed at so strange a circumstance at that hour of the night, for it was then past nine o'clock, he ran to the window, and, just as he threw it up, another volley pealed through the air, and

shouts, cries, and execrations mingled with the rattling of the balls against the windows, and smashing the shutters and glass to atoms, left him perfectly astounded. It was not even then quite dark, and as he looked out, he could see a large body of Vendean troops retreating through the main street, every moment making a stand, and firing a volley at the enemy, who were driving them through the town, while pistol and musket shots were fired from many of the windows down on the revolutionary soldiers.

Tom Starling rushed into the room, followed by Hannah, half dressed, while the inmates of the hotel were running, frantic with terror, in every direction.

"Oh, sir, come, for God's sake, to Miss Fanny," exclaimed Hannah, breathless with fear; "she is dressed, and in an agony of terror."

Thrusting the pocket book into his vest, Claude hurried down to the saloon, where he

found Fanny and all the females of the establishment in a state of intense alarm, for the firing, and shouting, and tumult still continued.

“Oh, Claude,” exclaimed the poor girl, just roused from her sleep, after a day of excitement and fatigue—“Oh, Claude, misfortune still pursues us; they say, the revolutionary army has forced the town gates, driving a large body of Vendean troops before them. Hark, oh, Heavens!”

And, as she spoke, a crash of shutters and glass, filling the room with splinters and fragments, sent the terrified females of the inn shrieking from the apartment.

“Come from the front room, my beloved,” said Claude, “at all events, and do not despond—it is terrible—and you so fatigued and weary—but there is not the danger you apprehend, the two parties are contending for the possession of the town. Even if the revolu-

tionists gain, they will not injure the inhabitants."

The landlord and his wife, as the firing and shouts grew fainter and fainter, regained courage, and the former, approaching our hero, said—

"I have barricaded all the doors, Monsieur, so that until one party or other gains possession of the two gates, no danger is to be apprehended. I fear the troop the republican force is driving through the town is that of Monsieur D'Elbee. There were rumours all this morning in the town that General Queteneau had changed his intention, and was marching this way on his road to Thouars—but we did not believe the intelligence. God grant that Colonel D'Arblay's dragoons may not be with them."

"I should say not," answered Claude, "for I have not heard the tramp of horse."

As he spoke, the regular heavy tramp of many men marching in compact order and

military array was heard in the street, and then the word of command to halt, broke upon the sudden silence.

Fanny's head drooped upon her lover's shoulder as, bursting into tears, she murmured—

“We are doomed to be separated, dear Claude—may God preserve you.”

As he pressed the weary girl to his heart, and whispered words of love and hope, a loud, thundering summons was heard at the hotel door, and then an authoritative voice demanding instant admittance.

Tom Starling, who had been inspecting what was going on in the street, called out—

“The whole street, sir, is filled with soldiers. We had better stem out by the back.”

“You had better do so, Monsieur,” said the landlord, “and get out of the town. The young lady and her attendant will be quite safe with my wife and daughters. She can

dress herself like them, and will pass unnoticed; these men will only be quartered on us for a short time. But I must open my doors, they will burst them else."

"Oh, Claude! my beloved Claude!" whispered Fanny, "do fly, and get to Monsieur de la Rochejaquelein. I shall be quite safe with this kind woman and her daughters."

There was not much time for thought, for the landlady, who had learned their situation, implored Claude to escape, the guide would be sure to take him safely from the town, and the lady would be in less danger without him.

Claude could very well imagine that if he remained and was recognised, he should be at once seized, and his seizure might lead to the recognition of Fanny by some of D'Arblay's dragoons. He, therefore, resolved to attempt an escape. Taking the pocket book from his breast, he gave it to Fanny, saying—

"Keep this, dearest, about your person—in it is that important document that was concealed in

the cave by George Thornback, and taken from thence by his dastardly brother. You will never be subjected to the indignity of a search, even if you are discovered to be English. I might be taken, and, if so, should assuredly be searched, and thus lose these important papers. The principal villain is dead; therefore, all you have to fear is temporary detention, from which, if I escape, I will release you. Ah, they have entered the house."

They had reached the back premises, and could hear the tumult raging in the front.

"Oh, my God," exclaimed Fanny, "if I had only the strength and power to fly with you, my own Claude."

Pressing her to his heart, Claude, with a sigh, consigned her to the care of the warm-hearted landlady and her daughters, and then, followed by Tom Starling and the guide, passed into the garden, scaled the walls, and dropped down into a deserted lane leading into the interior of the town—while Fanny, de-

jected and overcome with fatigue, followed the good landlady into their private apartments, the rest of the mansion being occupied by the officers and soldiers of General Queteneau's army. Two thousand men had entered the town, and six thousand more were on march, the whole proceeding to invest Thouars; the advanced regiments about a league from the town, had encountered the small force of Monsieur D'Elbe and Monsieur De Lescure, whom they had hotly pursued through the town, coming in at one gate, and retreating through the other, thus gaining, with a very trifling loss, the intricate country on the other side.

The advanced force was commanded by Lieutenant-General Marce, who had fled with his fugitive troops into the district where General Queteneau was encamped. The latter suddenly altered his intended route, sent on General Marce, himself following with his principal force, determined to take Thouars, and there concentrate his forces.

General Marco was neither a fierce and cruel commander, although smarting under the sense of his surprise and defeat, by Henri de la Rochejaquelein, he had no intention of making the inhabitants of Landri pay the penalty. Having driven out the insurgents, he quietly quartered his men in the houses most capable of containing them, himself and his staff occupying the principal hotel, where the English party had rested, but offering no molestation to its inmates; therefore Fanny, somewhat relieved, and only apprehensive for her beloved Claude, was able to retire to rest, of which she was, in truth, much in need; the exertions she had made, and the trial she had experienced the previous day, having quite overcome her powers of endurance. But the next day showed how fortunate had been Claude's departure, for early in the morning, Colonel D'Arblay entered the town with his regiment of dragoons, he, himself, and several of the troop quartering themselves in the same

hotel with General Marce. When our heroine heard of his arrival she trembled from head to foot, for though they had not met, she felt satisfied he would at once detect her or Hannah as not being French, she therefore resolved to keep close to her chamber till the revolutionary army had left. But poor Fanny was discovered through a means she little thought of.

About an hour after the arrival of D'Arblay's dragoons, there was observed to be a considerable commotion amongst the dragoons attending to their horses in the hotel stables, and two of the men at once had communication with their colonel; the consequence was that Monsieur Suffren, the landlord, was summoned into the presence of General Marce and Colonel D'Arblay.

"You have, in your stables, Monsieur Suffren," said Colonel D'Arblay, sternly, "two horses and two mules, pray where are the two Englishmen that owned those horses, and also

the two females that travelled on the mules, take care, sir, how you reply," fiercely added the Colonel, his face flushing with passion "for you cannot presume to say the animals came into your stables of their own accord—and let me warn you,* if you attempt to disguise the truth, you will be treated as a traitor to the republic of France. Those d——d English rebels have shot three of the dragoons of my regiment, besides slaying their officer, and it is well known that after their release from the prison of Doué, they fought in the ranks of the rebels; so now you know the ticklish situation in which you stand; already you and your townsfolk are suspected as favouring the insurrection. I again warn you to take care lest you incur the penalty, the fugitives assuredly will, if taken—be shot without ceremony."

Monsieur Suffren grew very pale, as Colonel D'Arblay spoke. General Marce, sitting ap-

parently unconcerned, looking out of the window.

The landlord was a kind-hearted man, a fond husband and father, and a thorough royalist in his heart ; but yet to brave the fate threatened him, for perfect strangers, not even his countrymen, appeared want of consideration for his wife and family. He therefore resolved to tell the truth, and yet endeavour to protect Miss Fleetwood.

“ Well, Colonel,” said Monsieur Suffren, speaking boldly, and yet very respectfully, “ I have no wish to hide the truth, because when I received those persons into my hotel, I could not be aware that they had committed the acts you mention.”

“ Bah,” fiercely interrupted the Colonel, “ you knew they were English—we are at war with England, therefore you must have known they were escaped prisoners. However, answer me briefly—where are they ?”

“ I suppose concealed somewhere in the town, Colonel,” returned the host of the ‘Lily of France,’ “for I can take my oath the moment they heard the general’s summons at my door, they escaped.”

“ They,” repeated the Colonel with a sneer, and a terrible frown, “the two men might, but do you pretend to say,” and he fixed his eyes steadily on the alarmed Monsieur Suffren, “that the two females left your house with them ?”

“ *Corbleu*, Colonel,” interrupted General Marce, with a good-humoured laugh, turning round and regarding the inn-keeper with a smile ; “you would make a first-rate lawyer, you will frighten Monsieur Suffren into doing an ungallant action ; if the men have escaped, and I dare say they have, for it would have been madness to run the risk of staying in this house after our entry, you surely do not want to wage war with women ; those poor girls must be frightened out of their little

wits as it is, without further adding to their alarm; you had better send and have a strict search made through the town, for if this Captain, I forget his name, gets amongst the insurgents, he may do us mischief, for I have seen and felt his performance in fighting; but as to the women, let them alone, Colonel. *Diable*, I do not like to see young girls, and pretty ones as I have heard they are, frightened or injured."

"Oh, your name is famous, General," retorted D'Arblay with a half sneer, "for gallantry and devotion to the fair sex, but, in this case, I act from a sense of duty: this English girl, for there is only one—the other is her domestic—is a kind of ward of my wife's, she is a rich heiress, and my wife is dsitracted at her eloping with this scheming English adventurer, and I wish to place her under her protection again."

"Well, *corbleu*, I cannot say she has bad taste," said the General, rising, "for I say

this English Captain, close enough, and he is as fine and handsome a fellow as ever I beheld; and I heard that he defended his yacht in a most extraordinary manner, against the corvette, *Légère*; but do as you think proper, Colonel, only if you do recover your good lady's ward treat her gently."

The General was about to leave the room, when the door opened, and Fanny Fleetwood, her face flushed with excitement, but with a calm and steady step, entered, while Madame Suffren and one of her daughters and Hannah stood without, pale and trembling. General Marce drew back, struck with surprise and admiration of the lovely girl before him, while Colonel D'Arblay, with his eyes sparkling with rage, for he somehow anticipated and guessed the young lady's intention, was advancing to take her by the arm.

But Fanny, with a look of scorn, turned from him, and advancing, said to General Marce—

“Pardon me, General, for thus intruding; but I have overheard all that has been said. This kind woman trembled for her husband’s life. I could not bear to think either should suffer on my account—I, therefore, insisted on coming here; but hearing the false statement——”

“Take care young lady, take care,” interrupted Colonel D’Arblay, furious with passion; “how you dare to assert I made any false statement.”

“Nay, Colonel D’Arblay,” said General Marce, a gentleman in every respect, and though from principle joining the revolutionists, yet widely differing from them in carrying out their ends, “Nay, Colonel D’Arblay, you are not going, I hope, to challenge this young lady;” and taking Fanny’s fair, small hand, he led her to a seat, saying—“my dear young lady, you speak our language so charmingly, that really I almost doubt your being the runaway the Colonel speaks of; I beg you to be

under no apprehension either for yourself or Monsieur Suffren, he could not act otherwise, as a Frenchman, than he has."

"And pray, General," asked Colonel D'Arblay, mastering, with exceeding difficulty, his rage and vexation, "what is to be done with this young lady, since you refuse to restore her to the protection of my wife."

"I have refused no such thing, Colonel," replied the General; "I will leave it to this young lady to decide; for I do not think the revolutionary army of France will gain laurels by capturing young maidens."

"No," muttered the Colonel, between his teeth, though it reached the ears of General Marce; "no, nor in one thousand two hundred men running away from a handful of rebels."

The General turned round somewhat pale, but perfectly calm, and laying his hand on D'Arblay's shoulder, said, in a low voice—

"As a simple gentleman, I shall require an explanation of that sentence another time. At

present, sir, as our swords are wanted for our country, I pass it by; but as to this young lady, till Madame D'Arblay herself comes to claim her; she shall remain under my protection."

Colonel D'Arblay bit his lip till the blood flowed; but he merely remarked—

"'Tis well, General a higher tribunal shall judge between your conduct and mine," and turning on his heel, he left the saloon.

Fanny had listened in trembling apprehension, and as she heard the words of General Marce, she murmured to herself—

"Am I always destined to bring into trouble those who are generous enough to protect me?"

As soon as Colonel D'Arblay quitted the room, the General seated himself beside her, and in a gentle, kind manner said—

"Now, my dear young lady, tell me candidly and without fear, how you are situated, and what claim Madame D'Arblay has to advance concerning you."

"No claim whatever, General," returned Fanny, and then in simple, but convincing language, she briefly related the connection between her and Madame D'Arblay, and her reason for flying from the Chateau Bois-Philibert. She also told of her accidental meeting with her lover, to whom, she stated, her cheek flushing as she spoke, she had been betrothed from her earliest years. General Marce listened with great interest and attention. He was a most kind and affectionate husband and father.

"My poor child," said the General, tenderly, "you have suffered much; I understand it all, and I may say to you, I feel rejoiced that Monsieur Tregannon has escaped; I would not for any consideration that he fell into my hands, for great as is the interest you have excited in me for him, I could not refuse to do my duty. The conduct of Colonel D'Arblay is infamous, and to me somewhat mysterious; but I will protect you as long as it is in my power to do so. At present you had better

keep yourself confined to the private apartments of Madame Suffren, till the arrival of the General in Chief Quetenau, who is a kind, noble, and conscientious man, but a firm, and steadfast upholder of the infant Republic of France.

Fanny, grateful for the kindness and generosity of General Marce, expressed herself to that effect, and the French commander, respectfully kissing her hand, consigned her to the care of the delighted Madame Suffren.

CHAPTER XI.

LEAVING the shores of France, we must request our readers to return with us to England. Some six months after the departure of the Surinam for India, Sir Charles Treycastle's London attorney received a letter from a Mr. Fleeceall, also an attorney, but one of a widely different class. We shall not trouble our readers with the entire contents of the letter. It will be sufficient to say that on the part of Sir James Tregannon, of Tregannon Park, Cornwall, etc., he required to see by what right Sir Charles

Treastle held the Pentoven estate, as Sir James Tregannon laid claim to all property left by the late Sir Claude Tregannon, as heir at law.

As Mr. Topsham was not very well acquainted with either the Tregannon property or Sir Charles's rights, merely acting for him in business connected with the mines, he at once wrote to Mr. Vigors, at Truro.

"Ha!" muttered Mr. Vigors, when he read the London attorney's letter, "he's found out the flaw in the title, and we cannot oppose his right till the Tregannon case comes into court. I'm getting rather uneasy about this affair. The Surinam cannot be back under eight or ten months, if so soon. However, I must consult with Sir Charles."

But Mr. Vigors was destined to be more astonished before the week was expired, for on his return from Treastle, he was visited by Mr. Treestail, who, with a look of great consternation, informed him that he had received

notice from the mortgagees of the Tregannon estate to quit the mansion, and give up the land on the twenty-ninth of next September, as Sir James Tregannon had resolved to return to England, the state of affairs in France preventing his remaining in that country, and also that he intended to reside in the mansion of Tregannon.

Mr. Vigors was astounded; he looked at Mr. Treestrail with a rather puzzled expression of countenance, saying—

“Upon my honour the plot thickens. James Tregannon must have contrived to buy off the evidence of Trelawney, the Leeds’ constable.”

“I heard in Falmouth yesterday,” said Mr. Treestrail, “that he has been dead some months, and that he died very suddenly.”

“Humph! that accounts for this sudden resolution of returning to England. However, I am to meet Sir Charles in London early next week. We must do all we can to delay this question of right to the Pentoven estate and

arrears. You, of course, my dear sir, must give up the house at once, as that is in your agreement with the mortgagees. I wonder how the deuce James Tregannon raised the money to satisfy the creditors; though, to be sure, if his attorney, who, by the way, is a dangerous fellow, knows that Sir Charles has no real claim to the Pentoven estate, he would find little difficulty in raising the residue of the mortgagees' claims. However, till we have a consultation in London, we cannot presume to speak definitely on the subject."

Sir Charles Treastle and his lady, with Mary Tregannon, proceeded to London, intending to pass some time there, having purchased a very handsome mansion in —— Square, leaving its furniture and decorations to the taste and skill of a fashionable upholsterer. Having established his family in their new mansion, Sir Charles, who felt considerable uneasiness about his situation with respect to the Pentoven estate, hastened to call on Mr. Saun-

ders, and to meet by appointment there, his own solicitor, Mr. Vigors.

“Well, Sir Charles,” said Mr. Saunders, shaking his friend’s hand, “I see we must be stirring ourselves, for the enemy is in the field, determined to push his claims to the utmost. But do you know who’s dead?”

“Dead!” repeated Sir Charles. “No---I trust no one that I have an esteem for.”

“Well, I do not think there is any regret to be felt by any one for the defunct, for I never yet heard that he performed a good action. I mean Curtis Bond—he died this morning.”

“God bless me! Curtis Bond! dead!” said Sir Charles. “Why I never heard that he was ill. How remarkably sudden!”

“You may say fairly that he killed himself,” said Mr. Saunders. “Four or five days ago, it seems, he was in Lyme Regis, looking over and receiving the rents of the Grange estate. You know the extraordinary miserly disposition of Mr. Bond. He actually started from Lyme

Regis on the outside of the Axminster stage, and travelled the whole way to London amidst a relentless torrent of rain. On reaching his house he was seized with a severe shivering, went to bed, but obstinately refused all medical advice till too late ; and when told his recovery was hopeless, he ordered the doctor to leave the house, and shortly after sent for his lawyer, Mr. Turnbull, and I heard made a will, but first had a long conference with a clergyman. He lingered through the night, and this morning expired about nine o'clock."

"Well, really, I feel some regret," said Sir Charles, "at his death. He had few amiable qualites, I know ; and yet, I have heard he performed some strange executive benevolent acts—few and far between certainly. He had the power, had he not, of willing away the Grange estates ? He must have been worth an immense fortune besides. I have heard it said Lord Penchurch would be his heir."

"It's very possible," said Mr. Saunders ;

“and a pretty scapegrace he is to inherit such a fortune. But now let us talk over our own affairs,” said the lawyer.

It is not necessary to inflict upon our readers the dull details of intricate law matters. It is quite sufficient to say, that Sir Charles placed the whole matter in the hands of Mr. Saunders and Mr. Vigors, to proceed in the case in the best manner they could, and to employ the first counsel in the metropolis, and in every possible manner dispute the claims of James Tregannon, and gain time till the return, if possible, of Claude Tregannon from India.

Sir Charles Treacastle then proceeded to the mansion of Mr. Fleetwood; he found the old gentleman in the most exuberant spirits.

“How rejoiced I am to see you, my dear Sir Charles,” exclaimed the worthy merchant. “I would have written to you this very night, for this morning I received news, from a ship leaving Calcutta, as she ran up the Hooghley. She spoke the Surinam, and learned

the glorious intelligence that the vessel was attacked by a French corvette full of men, and carrying heavy metal, but after a splendid action of forty-five minutes, the French corvette struck her colours to the Surinam. The Commander carried his prize with him to Calcutta. He is a glorious fellow, by Jove he is ! Well may my little Fan be proud of her lover—eh, Sir Charles ?” and the old gentleman, in a state of great excitement, declared he would have given two thousand pounds to have been on board the Surinam.

“ This is good news, indeed,” said Sir Charles, well pleased himself at his brother-in-law’s gallantry. “ This will put my sister-in-law, Mary, in great spirits. She sent her love to you, and will come to see you to-morrow. She is determined, now Fanny is away, to make a conquest of you.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha !” laughed the merchant, merrily. “ I know where those bright eyes of hers have done a world of mischief ; and next

to my little Fan, she is the brightest and fairest maiden within twenty miles of the sound of Bow bells."

"By-the-bye, did you hear," observed Sir Charles, after some conversation relative to Claude Tregannon's claims, "that Curtis Bond is dead?"

"That is the man that turned your brother-in-law out of Grange House, when almost dead of fever—eh?—he ought to have died long ago, the miserable, miserly fellow," continued the old gentleman, with a look of disgust. "I wanted to purchase that Grange property from him, but the answer he gave my lawyer was, that if I were to give him ten thousand pounds more than it was worth, I should not have it. What the deuce did I ever do to him—eh?"

Sir Charles smiled at the worthy merchant's vivacity, and after some further conversation, took his leave, promising to dine with him the next day, with Lady Treacastle and Mary,

when they could have a long chat to themselves on family matters.

On his return home, Sir Charles found the Honourable Frederick Delaware sitting with Lady Treastle and Mary.

“So Mr. Curtis Bond is dead,” said Frederick Delaware to Sir Charles. “I have been puzzling my brain to make out who he has left his large property to. I have found out already that Lord Penchurch is mistaken in supposing that he is the lucky man. I heard also that he had the power to will the Grange estate, being the last in the entail. I remember Lord Penchurch saying he would have the Grange estate, and no thanks to his miserly cousin, but he is quite mistaken.”

“Well, you have roused my curiosity,” said Sir Charles, “for the property is very large, and I do not know any blood relative he has except Lady Penchurch. We shall hear tomorrow or next day. By-the-bye, Mary, I

have promised that we shall all dine with that worthy soul, Mr. Fleetwood—and you, Delaware, will find an invitation when you go home. You are a most especial favourite of his; he intends asking you to his wedding when he obtains Mary's consent."

"Ha," said Frederick Delaware, with a merry laugh, while Mary's cheek crimsoned, "I will surely attend, for I intend requesting him to confer the same favour on me."

Sir Charles saw by Mary's colour, and the smile on Lady Trecastle's features, that something not very disagreeable to any of the party present had occurred; but a look from Mary satisfied him, and, changing the subject, he mentioned what Mr. Fleetwood told him of Claude Tregannon's capture of the French corvette.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Frederick Delaware, with enthusiasm, "I knew if ever he had an opportunity he would distinguish himself. I glory in Claude's success."

A bright and affectionate smile from Mary

rewarded Frederick Delaware for his speech ; in fact, he had that very morning pressed his suit with her, and so successfully, that he succeeded in gaining an answer, which, though not, perhaps, quite so favourable as he could have wished, was still delightful to a fond lover. Mary had consented to be his on the return of her brother from India.

Whilst sitting at breakfast the following morning, Sir Charles received a note from a Mr. Turnbull, a solicitor of good name and practice, requesting the favour of his attendance at the mansion of the late Curtis Bond, Esq., at four o'clock on the following day, to hear the will of the deceased gentleman read.

"God bless my soul," said the Baronet, looking at Lady Treastle, and then reading aloud the note, "this is curious enough. I never was on terms of intimacy with the late Mr. Bond ; I have met him several times, but in a distant, formal kind of way."

"Perhaps he has left you a legacy," said Mary.

“If he has left Claude one, after his cruel conduct to him, there would be some sign to be seen that he possessed human feelings before he left this world. All his life he was an extraordinary, eccentric man,” said Sir Charles Treastle. “Yesterday evening, at the club, I heard some gentlemen, who knew him well, speaking of some acts of his, disclosing extraordinary meanness one moment, and the next actually performing a munificent act; and finally sacrificing his life to save two or three paltry pounds; and even when a doctor might have saved him, he refused to pay the fee of a guinea.”

Somewhat curious to hear the will of the late Curtis Bond, Esq., Sir Charles Treastle proceeded to the mansion of the deceased, and was shewn into a large and spacious drawing-room, containing very old and neglected furniture; there was an air of singular decay and melancholy about the whole premises. The deceased kept but two servants, a very old

dame, and as ancient a male domestic; he rarely ate or drank at home; in fact, few knew where he ate his meals. It was thought he indulged in but one in the twenty-four hours, and that of a very frugal description.

On entering the room, Sir Charles perceived three gentlemen; two were strangers, the other was Mr. Turnbull. The next moment, Lord Penchurch, in deep mourning, entered; with a haughty and supercilious bow, he passed Sir Charles, who scarcely noticed his salute. He perceived that Lord Penchurch's look, when he entered the room, was one of considerable annoyance, for, on approaching Mr. Turnbull, he said something in a low voice, with his eyes fixed on Sir Charles. Mr. Turnbull's answer Sir Charles heard.

"Such were my instructions, my lord."

The other two gentlemen were introduced to the Baronet, they were very distant connections of the late Curtis Bond.

After a few preliminary observations, Mr.

Turnbull produced the will, which was of extremely small dimensions, and breaking the seal, he read its contents in a clear, calm tone.

After the usual preliminary remarks contained in all wills, it went on as follows :—

“To John Walters, Esquire, of Sion House, Lincolnshire, I bequeath the sum of four thousand pounds, because he never expected a shilling of me, and never once troubled me with a visit, nor claimed relationship; for the same reasons, I bequeath the sum of four thousand pounds to James St. George, Esquire, of the county of Middlesex; to Harriet Rees and David Hotman, my domestics, I leave the sum of six hundred pounds each.

“To my esteemed cousin, Lord Augustus Penchurch, I bequeath my blessing, he having refused my advice; nevertheless, I strongly recommend to him to alter his course

of life. I do not bequeath him gold, because I never knew his lordship had any regard how he used it."

Mr. Turnbull read these words in a hesitating sort of tone, with a side glance at his lordship, who, though his face was flushed with inward rage and mortification, uttered not a word. Mr. Turnbull continued—

"Being convinced, in this my last hour, that I committed an act of great injustice and cruelty to one deserving better treatment at my hands, and wishing to shew my sincere repentance, for having acted as I did, and also convinced that I could not do better with my wealth, I bequeath to Henry Claude Tregannon, only son and heir of the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, of Tregannon Park, Cornwall, the entire residue of my property, lands,

houses, and tenements, &c., &c. And I appoint Sir Charles Trecastle, of Trecastle, and Mr. Thomas Turnbull, of the City of London, solicitor, to be my executors ; and, as a token of my regard, I bequeath to each of them the sum of five thousand pounds. But should the said Henry Claude Tregannon have ceased to exist, then the property bequeathed to him shall go to the crown."

Sir Charles Trecastle had listened to the reading of this singular will with great surprise. As Mr. Turnbull finished, there was a dead silence, during which, Lord Penchurch rose from his seat, and, pausing a moment, before he quitted the room, he said—

"My worthy cousin has left a will behind him which will convince the world, who might have doubted the fact before, that a lunatic asylum ought to have been his domicile many years back. At all events, it is a good wind-

fall for the crown, as no such person exists as Henry Claude Tregannon, unless, indeed, the crown permits the offspring of a gipsy to dispute its rights."

Sir Charles Treacastle was a quiet, peaceably-disposed man, not at all a person to be discomposed by the words of his disappointed and enraged lordship, who immediately quitted the room.

Mr. Turnbull, turning to Sir Charles, said—

"I expected some such scene, and would willingly have prevented the late Mr. Bond from inserting those lines; but he seemed excited when I opposed it, and, not wishing to irritate him in his last hour, I wrote as he dictated.

"What can Lord Penchurch mean," asked Mr. Walters, "by saying there is no such person as Henry Claude Tregannon? I certainly never, I think, heard the name myself—living in a county, remote from Cornwall,

the name is strange to me, though I have some faint recollection of seeing or hearing, some years ago, of some tragical event in Cornwall happening to a person of a name like Tregannon—most likely it was Tregannon."

"It is too long a story, Mr. Walters," said Sir Charles, "to tell you all; but I will give you a brief outline; in fact, till the case comes before a court, there is no Henry Claude Tregannon."

Both Mr. Walters and Mr. St. George looked surprised; but Sir Charles contrived, in a very few minutes, to make them understand the facts of the case.

"You will now, no doubt, be opposed by the crown," said Mr. Turnbull.

"The case must come to a hearing shortly," said Sir Charles, "till then it is useless surmizing; at all events, the late Mr. Bond has acted with great generosity towards my brother-in-law, and has, as far as money goes, made

most ample amends for his previous singular conduct.”

“I remarked to him,” said Mr. Turnbull when he dictated this will, “that I was not aware that the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon had left a son; for it was a nephew that succeeded to the title and property. He replied speaking with difficulty and at intervals: ‘That he knew better—that James Tregannon, as he called himself, had no claim to the property or title, and that the right heir would soon come to his own.’”

After some further conversation the party separated, and Sir Charles proceeded to consult with Mr. Saunders. Two or three weeks passed in active exertions to bring the case of Henry Claude Tregannon into court, and finally a day was appointed for the opening of the suit, which by this time had excited considerable interest and curiosity in the higher circles. Before that day of trial, Sir James Tregannon

and his lady arrived in England, and proceeded at once to Tregannon Park.

Such was the state of affairs at the period of the capture of the "Water Witch," on her return voyage, by the French Corvette *Légérée*.

CHAPTER XI.

CLAUDE TREGANNON, as he descended from the wall of the garden of the 'Lily of France' into the lane beneath, felt acute distress of mind at leaving his beloved Fanny in such peril, though he knew well, right well, that he could do her no possible good by remaining, but that, on the contrary, his presence would undoubtedly lead to the detention of both, whereas left under the care of the landlady it was possible for her to escape observation.

As they proceeded along the lane, our hero

perceived that the guide carried a coil of rope, and on enquiring the reason, was told that they must scale the walls of the town, for no doubt both gates were guarded by the Revolutionary soldiers.

"The walls are not high," said Gourtrand the guide, "and the fosse is nearly dry."

It was a clear fine night, and as they passed out of the lane into the street they encountered numbers of persons passing in and out of their houses in considerable excitement; however they gained a part of the wall in a somewhat ruinous state, and passing the rope through an old ring, they descended easily, pulling the rope, which was long enough to double down, after them; crossing the old dry moat half filled with rubbish, they made for the wood that backed the town.

"You see, sir," said the guide, "the best plan for you to follow, will be to get to the next Hamlet, and keep close in one of the villager's cottages for a few days. I will re-

turn to the town in the morning; no human being will heed me, and I will stay and watch the result, and when General Marce leaves the place, which he must do in a day or so, I will return and let you know how mademoiselle is, and when it will be safe for you to rejoin her."

Claude thought this an exceedingly good plan, and they proceeded at a rapid pace—for the guide was well acquainted with the country—to a hamlet about seven miles from the town they had left; there was a small cabaret in the village, the inmates of which Gourtrand felt very little compunction in rousing from their slumber. Our hero was by no means particular as to accommodation, and the poor girl roused from her bed did all she could without asking any questions, to arrange the only spare room they possessed, while the guide and Tom Starling, after drinking a bottle of wine, were quite content with a shake down of clean straw in a cow house at the back.

Two or three days passed tediously with our hero, and his attendant Tom, who, however, tried to console himself during his confinement by making love to the aubergiste's daughter, a very rosy faced, good-humoured damsel, to whom Tom's attempts at French afforded such infinite amusement that he abandoned his *parlez vous*, and took to a more energetic language, for which he was rewarded by a sound box on the ear.

The sixth day Claude beheld with considerable anxiety the guide approach the auberge, and guessed by his features, as he entered the room, that he had important intelligence to communicate.

"Well, Gourtrand," he exclaimed, "let me hear your adventures, for I am all anxiety, but first say, did you see mademoiselle? is she safe?"

"I did see her, monsieur, but not to speak to her. She is well, but let me tell you the

strange news I have heard—in the first place Colonel D'Arblay is dead.”

“Dead ! good God,” cried our hero, “how and in what manner—for he surely did not die a natural death.”

“No, monsieur, that he did not—from what I could learn, it seems, he insulted General Marce a few days before in private, and afterwards before General Queteneau, who arrived the morning after our departure, and most of the officers of the regiments in the town he grossly insinuated that General Marce was a coward, and lost a battle and nine pieces of artillery by running away from a handful of men. The consequence was that a meeting took place with swords, and General Marce mortally wounded the colonel in the encounter, being also severely wounded himself. I learned from the landlord that the colonel did not die for several hours, and that he had an interview with General Queteneau before he expired. A messenger

was at once dispatched to Bois-Philibert for Madame D'Arblay, who arrived yesterday."

"Then madame is with mademoiselle," said Claude Tregannon.

"*Oui*, Monsieur, and the Colonel was buried this morning with military honours; and about two o'clock the whole force were under arms, and marched from the town. I saw Madame D'Arblay and mademoiselle enter a close caleche, drawn by two mules and escorted by a troop of horse. All the landlord could make out was, that Madame D'Arblay and Mademoiselle were to proceed to Thouars, where the whole of General Queteneau's army is quartered, and from some secret source he had also gained intelligence that the four great Vendean chiefs had united their forces and intended attacking the army of General Queteneau, even within the strong walls of Thouars."

Claude was perfectly astounded at this intelligence, and for several minutes remained

immersed in thought. At length rousing himself, he said, to Gourtrand—

“Where do you suppose the army of Monsieur La Rochejaquelein is?”

“It is said, or conjectured, the united army of the Vendéans is at Bressure.”

“Then the best thing we can do,” observed our hero, “is to set out at once, and join Monsieur La Rochejaquelein. If they intend attacking Thouars, and they succeed, mademoiselle may be restored to liberty.”

“I was just going to propose that you should do so, monsieur; they will surely take Thouars, for I hear our leaders have thirty thousand men under their command.”

“Is Thouars a strong place, Gourtrand?” questioned our hero.

“It has a terrible strong castle, monsieur,” said the guide, “built on a rock, its walls are one hundred and twenty feet high. The river Thoue nearly surrounds the town.—the bridges will be fiercely defended there’s no doubt, but

our men will carry every thing before them, I feel sure."

"I suppose, as we have lost our horses," said Claude Tregannon, "we must get over the ground on foot; how many leagues do you count it to Bressure?"

"Nine leagues, monsieur," replied the guide, "we can, no doubt, hire horses at the next town; our own were taken possession of by D'Arblay's dragoons."

"It is not worth while," returned Tregannon, "if we start very early, we can reach Bressure very easily by two o'clock."

Accordingly, shortly after sun rise, our hero and his two attendants left the little cabaret and stopping but once to refresh themselves on the road, they came within sight of Bressure a little before three o'clock. Bressure was then a walled town, and on approaching the gates they were stopped and questioned by the Vendean guard stationed there. Gourtrand soon gained admission, and obtained directions

to the quarters occupied by Henri De La Rochejaquelein and his troops.

The young Vendean leader embraced our hero, on his arrival, with real brotherly affection, and assigned him an apartment in the large mansion he himself occupied. The town was crowded with the army of the Vendean chiefs, and every moment was adding to their number, whilst the greatest excitement prevailed throughout. Cockades and sashes were being manufactured night and day, by the females of the place, for the whole army was to march upon Thouars in a few days.

It was not till late in the evening that the two young men had a quiet hour to themselves, for La Rochejaquelein was occupied with his troops and their arms every moment of the day, but having supped at a late hour, they were able to have a few hours' conversation to themselves, over a bottle or two of excellent wine.

La Rochejaquelein listened with extreme interest to our hero's recital.

“ Well, please God, in a day or two,” observed the Vendean chief, when Claude had finished his story, “ we shall be able to release your lady-love once more. We must take Thouars and defeat Queteneau before the grand army comes up from Paris, or else it will be all up in La Vendée. We heard of D’Arblay’s death yesterday, and no one expressed any regret. I assure you, his regiment is notorious for cruelty. General Marce is a brave man, and was not to blame for the panic that seized his soldiers, who were very inexperienced in our mode of warfare. I am rejoiced that he has taken your fair lady under his protection, and I do not think that Madame D’Arblay need, or indeed will grieve over her husband’s death, for he was a bad and vicious man in private life. It must be a great consolation to Miss Fleetwood to have her old and dear friend with her.”

“ It delighted me to hear that such was the case,” replied our hero, “ though it grieved me

at first to think how afflicting it must be to her, so lately re-united to her husband, to be separated for ever. But now tell me, Henri, what force have you with which to attack so strong a place as Thouars, especially when held by such an army as General Queteneau has under his command."

"Oh, we have a strong force—nearly thirty thousand men," said La Rochejaquelein, "Messieurs De Bonchamps, D'Elbee, and Lescure have joined their troops to those of Cathelineau and Stofflet, so that united we are a formidable force. The nine pieces of artillery we took from General Marce, are invaluable, and I feel so rejoiced, *mon cher*," continued La Rochejaquelein, "that we shall have your strong arm to assist us."

"I assure you," returned Tregannon, "but that I must remain unfettered, I would, with heart and soul, give you my assistance to the end; as it is, I must be content to fight by your side, when you advance upon Thouars,

and I trust, for more reasons than one, to see victory on our side."

Two days after this conversation the Vendean army marched out of Bressure, singing songs of enthusiasm ; arriving before Thouars on the third of the month, and prepared for the assault on the fourth.

Claude Tregannon passed the night of the third without sleep, to him the morrow was fraught with vital importance. To lose the battle was to lose all ; for it was impossible to conjecture what might be the future fate of Fanny if not released from the hands of the revolutionists. The real reign of terror had commenced, and should the revolutionary commissioners once get her into their power, in their hatred of England and all aristocrats, her life might, like many another equally innocent, be sacrificed.

The Vendean army possessed neither tents or baggage ; wrapt in their rough mantles or coats, they lay down and reposed on the spot

where they halted, taking, however, the precaution to send out men to act as advanced posts. No other care was taken. Henri La Rochejaquelein and Claude Tregannon lay in the midst of their men, conversing through the hours of the night. As soon as day broke, our hero sprang to his feet, and gazed around him with a sensation of singular awe and excitement. He stood in the midst of thirty thousand men, with the morning light just shewing their sleeping forms, stretched out without much order or regularity as to military array; numbers were rising and looking to their arms, others already commencing their simple breakfast—the last meal to hundreds of those now living before him.

Henri De La Rochejaquelein had moved in amidst his men—talking familiarly to all, laughing gaily with some—and finally joining a group of the chiefs, assembled round the Vendean banner.

In the distance, as he looked across the plain,

he could distinctly see the town and castle of Thouars.

"By the pipers of war, your honour," said Tom, Starling, coming up with a large basket on his arm, "I have managed to make out a breakfast anyhow."

So saying, Tom sat down, and very scientifically spread a cloth upon the sod, on which he placed a couple of fowls, a piece of beef, and bread and wine, and two cups.

"There's no fighting, your honour," continued Tom, "with your lockers empty. A ship well balasted stands to her canvass like a crutch."

"I allow that Tom," replied our hero; "nevertheless, my appetite is small this morning; but eat we must, to enable us to go through our work. Where did you get the fowls? I fancy they are the only ones in the camp."

Tom laughed.

"Why, your honour, I must confess these

worthy Vendéans don't feed well. Barley bread, a queer kind of white cheese, and sour wine is their mess ; so yesterday, I bagged a pair of fowls as we marched through a large village, and last night I plucked and boiled them ; the piece of beef, Monsieur Henri provided, and here he comes. The play will begin soon, your honour ; I will stick close to you, sir, if you have no objection."

"None whatever, Tom ; and I trust, in the mercy of Providence, to take us safe through the trial before us."

Monsieur De Lescure joined the young men at their morning meal ; he shook Claude heartily by the hand, expressing his regret at the *contre temps* he had experienced by the sudden and unexpected advance of General Marce ; he himself had had a very narrow escape of being cut to pieces, and was forced back through the town, with the loss of a few men ; the nature of the country where he came suddenly upon the force of General Marce not

permitting him to retreat any other way. "But we will, please God, drive them out of Thonars this day." Two hours after the morning meal, the whole army was in motion, under the command of its several leaders. Though not in uniform, or possessed of musical instruments, the Vendean army offered an imposing appearance, as it advanced across the plain towards Thouars. A long and narrow bridge, defended by a formidable body of troops, led by General Marce, crossed the deep waters of the Thoue. Henri De La Rochejaquelein, and Monsieur De Lescure, led the advance body, flanked by the nine pieces of artillery.

The Vendean commenced the attack with a sharp cannonade directed against the bridge; but so destructive was the return fire from the Republican soldiers, that the assailants fell back.

"Now, Henri—now or never," exclaimed our hero, greatly excited, for he saw that

unless one of the chiefs set the example and made a push, all would be lost, and waving his sword, he called out, in a loud voice—
“Follow, brave Vendean, and the bridge is ours.”

And springing forward, he made for the pass, amidst a shower of iron hail, with Tom Starling by his side, waving his cutlass, and tossing his hat, with a loud cheer, into the air. The effect was electric. Henri De La Rochejaquelein and Monsieur De Lescure the next moment followed, and then a tremendous rush was made at the bridge. The Republicans wavered, and after a short conflict, turned and retreated into the town. As Claude Tregannon, sword in hand, crossed the bridge, he perceived an officer, in a general's uniform, contending with his sword in his left hand, with several of the Vendean peasants—the next moment would have been his last, had not our hero, conjecturing it was General Marce, rushed in between

him and his enemies, and with some difficulty saved him just as he was beaten to the earth.

The French General rose, pale and exhausted, gave his sword to Claude Tregannon, saying, as he looked with surprise into his face—

“This is the second time, monsieur, that I have had the misfortune to be routed and defeated by your assistance. I saw you advance alone, but had you wavered five minutes longer, you would never have carried the bridge; a reinforcement of artillery was on its way.”

“’Tis the fortune of war,” returned our hero.

“You are the English Captain, are you not?” demanded the General as they walked together towards the spot where the Vendéans had halted previous to attacking the town.

“Such is the case, Monsieur le General,” answered Claude Tregannon, “and permit me,

now that I have an opportunity, to thank you for your kindness and generosity to a young English lady, at present, I believe, in Thouars."

"You saved my life, monsieur," returned the Frenchman, "and I will tell you what you must do, should you succeed in taking the town, which, however, is doubtful. I am doing no injury to the interests of my country in telling you how that interesting girl is situated."

At this moment Monsieur D'Elbee and Henri De La Rochejaquelein approached, and embracing Claude Tregannon, said—

"Your gallantry and courage has gained us this important advance ; in another hour we shall attack the town. And then politely taking off their hats to General Marce, they returned him his sword, saying he was a brave and humane man, and that after the taking of the town, he was quite at liberty to depart.

General Marce bowed, observing—it gave

him much pain to see Frenchmen contending against Frenchmen, instead of turning their united arms against the numerous enemies that threatened the nation.

The two chiefs then left General Marce with our hero, repeating that they were preparing to assault the town in an hour, but that they had no means to effect a breach in the walls, and were obliged to construct temporary ladders.

“They made a monstrous mistake,” said General Marce, to Tregannon, “in sending us against these Vendean towns without artillery of any calibre; our guns are nothing, and if they once scale the walls, I fear Queteneau will have to surrender; but permit me, while you have time to listen, to tell you a few particulars. Before Colonel D’Arblay died, he sent for General Queteneau, and informed him that Mademoiselle and Madame D’Arblay were united with you in carrying on a secret correspondence between England and the Vendéans, and he had the barbarity to denounce

them both to two of the revolutionary commissioners as dangerous spies, and aristocrats. He said that he had confined his wife at the Chateau Bois-Philibert, but that both Madame and Miss Fleetwood ought to be sent to Paris, and examined by the tribunal, of which Robespierre is the head. I need not tell you, if they were once before that blood-stained judgment seat, their sentence would be the Guillotine."

Claude felt his blood chilled as he exclaimed—

"Heavens! is it possible that any man lying on the bed of death could thus try to destroy his own wife and an innocent, unoffending girl."

"He was a bad man, monsieur," returned the French General, "and like many others in these fearful times, a scoffer and disbeliever. However, with this false charge on his lips—he died.

"General Queteneau is a good man and a

brave soldier, and probably he would not have heeded the words of Colonel D'Arblay, but the commissioners, two of those sanguinary wretches, the revolution, alas ! has given birth to, eagerly noted down the charge, and a troop of dragoons was despatched to the Chateau Bois-Philibert, where they found D'Arblay's unfortunate wife actually confined in a damp, miserable vault, under the charge of a woman named Bonchamps, who is known to be a sister of the notorious Madame L——. When brought to Landri, and told of her husband's death, she was greatly affected. In the mean time I did all I could to prove to General Queteneau the folly of the charge brought against Madame D'Arblay and the young English lady. The General had a long conversation with madame, and became fully convinced I was right ; she gave him the whole account of how she had passed the last fourteen years of her life, and told how she and mademoiselle had been captured by the *Légère* as

they were returning to England ; but the commissioners were deaf to all entreaties, and so blinded by fear, is every one acting under the rule of Robespierre and his clique, that General Queteneau was forced to submit to their orders, and they accompanied us to Thouars. General Queteneau refused to give them a force to conduct their prisoners to Nantes, and the commissioners are now waiting for an order from Paris. All I fear is, if they find that the town is likely to fall into the hands of the Vendéans, that they will leave with a party of D'Arblay's dragoons, who are furious at the loss of their Colonel, and will make at once for Paris. I do not wish to say more ; so, monsieur, I leave it to your own judgment how to act—I am powerless ; before we came here I did all that was in my power."

Tregannon pressed General Marce's hand warmly.

" You have acted nobly and humanely, and

from my heart I thank you," he said, fervently, "I must now leave you, I know how to act ; we may not meet again, but the memory of your kindness and generosity will never be forgotten."

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER a few minutes' conference with La Rochejaquelein and Monsieur Lescure, our hero, and his friend Henri, with five hundred men, left the main army, just ready for an assault, and guided by Gourtrand, re-passed the bridge, and making a considerable circuit, gained the other side of the town. At this side the walls were not so formidable, and they actually advanced close up to the gates, sheltered from observation by the lofty hedges that intersected the country. As they paused a moment

they perceived a party of horse, about fifty in number, ride out through the gates, followed by a close carriage, drawn by four horses.

"By Heavens you were right, Claude," said the Vendean chief.

As he spoke, the loud roar of artillery was heard pealing through the air.

"Take one hundred men with you, creep along that meadow, with the high hedge, you will cut them off at the foot of the hill. I will scale the walls on this side with these light ladders, and make an attack, that will draw off the attention of the besieged; now, lose no time."

One hundred of the Vendean peasants, with their rifles, eagerly followed our hero, and running rapidly along the meadow, concealed by the high hedges of the Vendee, they arrived at the edge of the main road, just as the troop of D'Arblay's dragoons, with the two commissioners riding at each side of the carriage, reached the spot.

"Fire wide of the carriage," said our hero, giving the word to fire, and leaping, as he spoke, into the road, followed by Tom, cutlass in hand.

"Blow me if I don't have a horse for the one the rascals robbed me of," shouted the English tar, making a snatch at a dragoon's bridle.

Startled and confounded by this unexpected discharge, which emptied nearly a dozen saddles, the men turned and fled, firing their pistols with but little damage. One of the commissioners, a tall, powerful man, rode up, striking the horses with the flat of his sword, and cursing the postillions for not urging on their horses to a gallop; but Claude Tregannon, running up, shot the foremost dead, and the others, becoming entangled, were seized and held by some of the Vendean; the two commissioners sprang up the hill towards the town, but they fell into a snare, and were shot down by La Rochejaquelein.

The astonishment and rapture of Fanny exceeded belief, when Claude Tregannon threw open the door of the carriage and caught her in his arms. Madame D'Arblay, pale, and looking ill, but calm and collected, could only utter—

“Thank God for this deliverance!”

“I must leave you, my beloved,” said Claude, pressing Fanny to his heart; “but you are saved. I must not desert those who have acted so generously towards us. I will leave Tom with fifty of these men to guard you till the town is won.”

“Oh, Claude,” cried Fanny, clasping her hands, the tears running from her eyes, “you leave me to rush again into danger—oh! my God!”

“I leave you to do my duty; you would not love me, dear one, were I to desert my colours.”

The next moment, with the remainder of the men, he was running up the hill, and was in

time to ascend the walls with La Rochejaquelein.

Messieurs D'Elbee and Lescure had scaled the walls on the other side, and Henri and our hero, driving the enemy before them, entered the great square, where General Queteneau, to save the place from the horrors of a sack, surrendered the town.*

The Vendean leaders and their troops behaved with the greatest moderation; no outrage was committed against the inhabitants. Monsieur Lescure, who greatly respected General Queteneau, having been well-treated by him when in his power some months previously, did all he could to persuade him to stay with the Vendean army, to escape the vengeance of the government for surrendering the

* The town of Thouars was surrendered by General Queteneau to the Vendean army, under the leaders above-mentioned, on the fourth of May, 179—.

town. But the General heroically resolved to return to the Republicans, and demand a trial.

Immediately after the surrender by General Queteneau, Claude hastened to conduct Madame D'Arblay and Fanny into the town.

Poor Fanny wept tears of joy when she beheld Claude approaching the carriage, which was drawn up by the side of the road. The Vendéans, in the mean time, had captured several horses, and stripped the dead dragoons of their arms and accoutrements.

Thouars was a considerable town, and possessed several large hotels. To one of these Claude conducted his overjoyed Fanny and Madame D'Arblay, where, the following day, they were visited by La Rochejaquelein and Monsieur De Lescure, who congratulated the blushing Fanny upon her escape from the revolutionary commissioners. General Marce also took a kind farewell. Altogether she felt much affected at the noble and generous conduct of all those who had interested

themselves in her fate; besides, her heart palpitated with delight at the encomiums and praises bestowed upon her lover.

Madame D'Arblay was resolved to quit France for ever, and return with her pupil and friend to England, for all chance of ever recovering either her own or her husband's property was out of the question.

The whole country to the sea-coast was now free from the revolutionary army, and our hero determined to lose no more time in journeying to the nearest port in the hands of the Vendéans. Rochelle had declared for the Royalists, and Claude Tregannon, who recollected that his captured ship, the *Water Witch*, was in that harbour, spoke to La Rochejaquelein on the subject of purchasing her, and embarking all his crew, whom he expected to find with Mr. Fleetwood, at Olone, waiting his arrival.

"I will see to that at once," said La Rochejaquelein; "it will be the best plan you can pursue; and in a fast-sailing craft like that,

you may easily escape any cruisers on the coast. As to your purchasing her, if she is still there, we cannot think of any such thing. You and your men have rendered us valuable assistance, and we confidently hope for aid from England ; the least we can do is to restore to you the vessel you so gallantly defended against the revolutionary tyrants of unhappy France."

As La Rochejaquelein could spare a few days, his troops, as was usual with them, having returned to their homes, he resolved to accompany our hero and his betrothed to Rochelle, and messengers were sent to Oloué to warn Mr. Fleetwood and the crew of the *Water Witch* to follow them to that town.

In four days the whole party were united. Mr. Fleetwood embraced his daughter with unmitigated delight, and, pressing poor Madame D'Arblay's hands, said—

"We will endeavour, my dear madame, to console you for your past misfortunes ; you

have been a fond mother to my child ; we have had a narrow escape from much misery ; but I trust God will spare me a few years to see you all settled and happy."

Both Mr. Fleetwood and Claude Tregannon insisted on purchasing the *Water Witch* from the Vendean government, well aware that their funds were very low, and that money was essentially necessary to them to carry out their views.

After much persuasion, on the part of Mr. Fleetwood, they agreed to take the sum of four thousand pounds, for which amount Mr. Fleetwood drew upon a well known London house.

Mr. Seabright and the crew were reinstated, to their infinite joy and surprise, in their old craft, and soon became actively engaged in completing her repairs, and getting her ready for sea.

La Rochejaquelein, having done all that it was in his power to serve Claude Tregannon and the grateful Fanny, bade them farewell

with sincere regret, presenting our hero with a pair of splendidly mounted pistols and a Vendée rifle, as tokens of remembrance, to recall to him in after life those whom he left behind, struggling to maintain their ancient freedom and the rights of the old monarchy. Claude Tregannon could only wish and pray for their ultimate success ; and, embracing his gallant friend, who had acted so generously and nobly, they parted, never alas ! to meet again. The fate of the heroic Vendean chiefs is too well known ; they fell, but their names will live in history.

Every attention that could be shewn by the authorities of Rochelle was offered to our hero and his crew ; many of the ladies of the place called and invited Fanny to their houses, but she declined leaving her friend, Madame D'Arblay, whose recent loss and delicate state of health made her prefer perfect retirement.

In ten days the Water Witch was ready for sea ; and, after a most cordial leave-taking

of the mayor and other persons in authority, and many of the first people of the town, the Water Witch, with the flag of old England at her peak, and a fine breeze filling her sails, glided from the harbour of Rochelle, her crew giving three hearty cheers as they passed the Mole, and which was as heartily returned by the numerous persons on the pier.

Fanny stood on the deck, leaning on the arm of her father, gazing, with the tears in her eyes, upon the land they were leaving—they were tears of thankfulness and gratitude, and never, during the long years of her after life did she ever forget the names of those who had so nobly befriended them.

“Ah, Claude,” said the fair girl, her cheek once more regaining its bloom, “never, never can I forget the agency I experienced the morning those horrid commissioners forced us into the calech to carry us to Paris. Oh, Heavens! the horror I experienced! I thought then we were separated for ever in this world;

hope was dead in my heart, and despair usurped its place. Dear Claude ! can we ever shew sufficient gratitude to that Merciful Providence that shielded and protected us through so many difficulties and dangers ?”

Claude was almost too happy to speak—he pressed to his heart the little arm that rested upon his, gazed into those fond and beautiful eyes, and shuddered when he thought how near had been to losing her for ever.

Over the sparkling waters of the Bay of Biscay glided the Water Witch, dashing the white foam from her bows, and bending gracefully to the fine breeze that filled her lofty sails.

Tom Starling had many a yarn to spin to satisfy the curiosity of his messmates ; he was very proud indeed of his feat of horsemanship, boarding the dragoon, and swamping him, as he termed his exploit.

A very careful look out was kept, but standing well out to sea, the Water Witch ran for

the coast of Ireland, and then steered direct for the Land's-end. The fourth day, the coast of old England was seen, and a loud cheer from the crew testified their delight. With a splendid westerly wind, she continued her course up Channel, and nothing occurring to delay or retard her voyage, her anchor was let go for the first time since leaving Rochelle off Gravesend.

The next tide she was at anchor off the well known dock from which the "Surinam" had sailed just nineteen months and eleven days from the period of their arrival.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONCE again, dear reader, we request you to enter, with us, into the library of Tregannon House, where, slowly pacing up and down, and deeply meditating, was the usurper, the self-styled Sir James, whose return to England had occasioned great surprise but no satisfaction to the inhabitants of the county.

It had become universally known that the lost heir was found, and would, ere long, supported by the members of his family, dispute the possession of the Tregannon title and

estates—an intense feeling of interest and anxiety was felt by all, coupled with warm wishes for the success of the new claimant, which anxiety encreased greatly as the period for his return from India approached. At length, the news arrived in London that “The Surinam” was at anchor in the Downs, and three days afterwards she entered the docks.

The consternation and grief of Mr. Fleetwood was great when, hastening to welcome the voyagers, he learned from Captain Burton that those in whom he was interested had sailed from Calcutta two months before his departure. The disastrous news was imparted to Sir Charles Treastle, and every means set in progress to discover what had become of those whose uncertain fate and fortunes were clouding the happiness of so many. Sir Charles and his family lamented for Claude, whilst Mr. Fleetwood wept over the loss of his brother and little Fan.

But if grief and suspense filled the hearts

of some, there were others who rejoiced, and a letter written in great elation of spirits was despatched by the attorney of Sir James Tregannon to his patron, who smiled a bitter contemptuous smile as he perused the lawyer's congratulations. He felt no elation, as he gazed round him on the walls and furniture, just as he had remembered them in his youth; he sighed to think how different it was with himself. A life of sin and dissipation had indeed changed him. His hair was grey—almost white, as were his beard and moustaches, whilst large bushy eyebrows almost shaded his dark eyes, from which came no glances but those of malice and revenge. Conscience told him why he had changed, but the conviction did not make him better. He still continued his career of crime, and even in the scene that had aroused the monitor within, whilst pacing to and fro, he plotted other schemes for vengeance, till aroused by the entrance of a

servant, who announced the arrival of Mr. Fleeceall.

Sir James gave a slight start, and then said—

“Show him in here.”

In a few minutes the attorney entered the room, looking, as Sir James thought, rather uneasy.

“What is the matter now, Mr. Fleeceall?” said Sir James; “you seem to have made a hasty journey from London. Pray sit down.”

“I have made a hasty journey, Sir James,” answered the attorney, “for the intelligence I have gained is better communicated by word of mouth than by letter. News has been received of the missing vessel, in which our opponent, Claude Tregannon, as he styles himself, sailed from India.”

“Ha! and what became of it?” demanded Sir James; “where is it now?”

“It was captured on the coast of France, or

near it, and those on board were carried prisoners to Rochelle or Rochefort."

A gleam of satisfaction shot from the dark eyes of Sir James when he heard this, but he merely remarked—

"He will be some time before he gets out of that scrape—if ever. In the state France is in, human life is very uncertain."

"But the worst of it is, Sir James," continued Mr. Fleeceall, looking anxiously at his employer, "it is said that he has escaped, and will reach England shortly."

"Why, how could such a report have reached England? Surely he would be as likely to have arrived as the report."

"It appears not, Sir James; the news was brought to London, and to Mr. Fleetwood by the captain of a small brig, that carried over a cargo of arms for the French insurgents at Rochelle. He heard, while in Rochelle, that an English captain and his crew had purchased the vessel in which they had been captured,

and were fitting her out to sail for England. He had no time to ask many questions, for he was preparing to sail, but heard Mr. Fleetwood's name mentioned ; and I feel satisfied," continued the attorney, "that this English captain must be the said Claude Tregannon."

"Curse his luck," muttered Sir James, "happen what will, he is sure to fall on his feet."

"There is not much cause to dread his return," observed Mr. Fleeceall, "if," he hesitated a little, but seeing Sir James's eyes bent upon him, he continued—"if, William Thornback's demands are settled and the paper he holds destroyed—"

Mr. Fleeceall would have given anything to know the contents of the said paper, but William Thornback had merely told him he held a document that if in the possession of Claude Tregannon, would in a moment upset the claims of his client, and the attorney ever since had been puzzling his brains to imagine

what it could be; he never for a moment doubted Claude Tregannon being the lawful heir; but that was nothing to him, his business was to prove him an imposter, and he employed some very eminent lawyers on his side, whose business it was likewise to defend the one in possession, whether the other was the real claimant or not; they were aware that the most talented men in the kingdom were opposed to them, but they were fed high, and the costs of the suit one way or other would be immense.

To return to our worthy attorney; Sir James, in reply to what he had observed with respect to William Thornback, whom in his heart he detested and abhorred, said—

“That there was no fear of him, he was daily expecting letters from him and others, which having to come through Holland had not arrived so soon as he had expected; with respect to the six thousand pounds, William Thornback was aware as well as Mr. Fleeceall,

that it was impossible to pay it till the Pentoven Estates, with the large arrears, came into his hands."

"Another extraordinary event, I have to relate," observed the attorney, "and that is the death of Mr. Curtis Bond."

"So the miser is dead," quietly remarked Sir James, "who has he left the Grange Estate to?"

"That is the most extraordinary part of the intelligence," answered Mr. Fleeceall. "He has left the whole of his very large property to Henry Claude Tregannon, son and heir to the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon of Tregannon Park, County Cornwall."

Sir James became livid with rage.

"Cursed, miserly wretch, what did he mean by such a bequest!"

"It is certainly very singular," said the attorney, "he has also appointed Sir Charles Treastle one of his executors; the will also states that in case of the said Claude Tregan-

non's death, his entire estates are to revert to the crown. Did you, Sir James, ever meet the late Mr. Bond?"

"Yes," returned Sir James with a smothered execration, "I did; however, this bequest of his will open the eyes of the crown lawyers, they will closely investigate his claims to the Tregannon name and estates, as well as ourselves."

"I wish I knew," remarked the attorney speaking thoughtfully, "the entire proofs they have to bring forward."

"Why you know, the only one I had any fear of," replied Sir James, "is the letter of George Thornback to his brother, William, which was taken from the pocket of William Thornback by—"

Sir James hesitated, as he said—

"By this pretended Claude Tregannon, and handed over to the constable with him at the time. You say that letter or confession

though it may make a great impression when read, a clever lawyer would be able to squash in a moment."

"Certainly," said the attorney, "if that was all, it would be of but little importance, for who is to prove that George Thornback really wrote it; it could be said that William Thornback had it written to extort money under false pretenses; there is no witness to his brother writing it, no one to prove the handwriting; in point of law, that document is nothing."

"William Thornback, or colonel as he styled himself, is now well known to be an imposter, that he obtained large sums from various persons in the metropolis, by forgery, gambling, and false dice. Do you know of any more important evidence than that, Sir James?"

"I do not; George Thornback and his wife are both dead—Stonehenge either perished at sea or is dead; I have never heard of him or his family

from the period of their flight; I do not myself see how my opponent can prove his birth."

"If," continued the attorney with a hesitating manner and a half look at Sir James, "I knew minutely the whole transaction from beginning to end, I could clearly see how we stand. Recollect, Sir James, you are playing for a heavy stake; the Tregannon estates are worth fifteen thousand pounds a year, the Pentoven property with arrears is worth one hundred thousand pounds, the mines have been working these eight years, and producing ten thousand pounds per annum, and two other mines were ready to be worked, said to be even more valuable. I pray you let there be no secret between us, let me hear all, that in case of an emergency I may know how to act."

James Tregannon gazed into the attorney's face with a look that penetrated every thought and idea in the man's brain, but Mr. Fleeceall bore the scrutiny without quailing, because he

was sincere and in earnest, for his own interest and future position was at stake.

Sir James was aware that William Thornback had told the attorney a great deal, but evidently not all. He also knew that Mr. Fleeceall was not at all scrupulous, that, like Stonehenge, he would undertake anything for gold, that his reputation was rather tainted, and though he still held his ground in the metropolis amongst his brother attorneys, that his character for probity was none of the best; therefore, after a few moments' consideration, he resolved to go minutely into the past, and state all the particulars of the abduction of Claude Tregannon; so Mr. Fleeceall listened, looking not at all surprized, for judging from what he had heard from William Thornback and his own surmises, he had arrived pretty nearly at the actual facts.

"It was certainly a very aggravating act of the late Baronet," said the attorney, in a kind of apologetic tone, "to marry a second time,

and a woman who had lived with him in such a capacity, and thus to cut you off from the title and estates. However, you have them now, and I trust we shall keep you in possession. Claude Tregannon will marry, no doubt, this wealthy heiress Miss Fleetwood, so he'll be well off, as far as fortune is concerned ; but now, Sir James," said the attorney, with a more confident manner, "let me ask you a question or two. Had the child any birth-mark ? Did you ever hear your uncle, or cousins, or any one speak of such a mark ? It sometimes does occur, you know ; for after all, this child may be George Thornback's. His dying declaration before witnesses, that he was his son, will come out very strong, and I am not at all convinced, in my own mind, but that George Thornback might have imposed upon you."

There was a bitter, contemptuous curl on the lip of Sir James as he listened to the cunning attorney, who only said this to gloss over his

own conduct in aiding such imposture. Now James Tregannon knew too well the contrary ; but he had told his story, purposely leaving it possible for Mr. Fleeceall to entertain such a supposition. He however replied—

“ No, I never heard anyone mention a mark of any kind, and except for the strong likeness, I should think it quite possible that George Thornback might have deceived me.”

“ Ah ! likeness may create a sensation, but have no effect as a point of law,” remarked the attorney. “ Have you any recollection, Sir James, what became of the child’s garments, etc.”

“ Why, of course,” interrupted Sir James, “ some were put on the body found, if the drowned child was not Claude Tregannon, some were left in the cave.”

“ Well, I will not detain you any longer, Sir James,” observed Mr. Fleeceall, after some few minutes’ thought, “ if you will permit me to look over the purchase deed of the Pentoven

estate, and one or two other papers of importance necessary for me to read over, I shall be able to return to London by the mail to-night."

"The chest of deeds and papers relative to that estate is here," said Sir James, and unlocking a cabinet, he took out a key and opened a large chest—part of a book-case, to all appearance—and told Mr. Fleeceall that whilst he read them over at his leisure, he would order him some refreshment.

Sir James left the library, and proceeded to the drawing room. As he looked out from the window, he observed the carriage coming up the avenue, and in a few minutes Lady Tregannon entered the room. Great was the contrast presented in the appearance of the husband and wife, the years that had blanched his hair, and left deep furrows in his face, had but transformed the handsome unformed girl of the Marine Parade into a finished woman of the world. Her sojourn in Paris, and her association with the women of the revolution, had given ease of

manner and exterior polish. Her dress was faultless in selection, though somewhat in its style too *abandon* for the sober taste of the English ; but the refinement in manner had not been produced by refinement in mind, for her ladyship, was haughty, unscrupulous and reckless. She had acquired great ascendancy over her husband, and entered without hesitation into all his schemes. He had no secrets but one from her. She knew he had stolen the heir of Tregannon, and she was well convinced that Claude was that stolen child ; but she did not know the one terrible secret—a secret that poisoned every hour of her husband's life, and made him at times so gloomy and desponding that he gladly plunged into all the excesses and excitements of the revolution to drown thought.

When she entered the drawing-room, Sir James saw in a moment by her countenance that something unusual had occurred, he knew she expected to receive letters at the bankers

in Truro, and as she came hastily into the room, with her face flushed and her manner somewhat excited, and threw herself into a chair, he said—

“You have received letters from France; something unpleasant has happened I fear.”

“Worse than unpleasant,” she replied; “but who is that man in the library?”

“Oh, only Mr. Fleeceall, my London attorney.”

“Get rid of him then as soon as you can; for what I have to read to you is important. I have had too long letters from Madame L——; but there has been a terrible delay in their reaching me.”

“Mr. Fleeceall no doubt has finished looking over the papers, and taken the refreshment I ordered him, as he is anxious to return to London to-night. Our cause comes on next week.”

“I tremble to think of it,” observed Lady

Tregannon, in a low voice ; “ this letter of Madame L——’s has frightened me.”

Sir James looked startled ; for he knew his wife possessed more nerve than himself. In half an hour Mr. Fleeceall had packed up the papers he wanted, hastily swallowed some refreshment, and was riding back to Truro.

“ Now, for God’s sake, do not keep me any longer in suspense,” cried Sir James, when he once more found himself alone with his wife.

She had two letters before her, and looked very anxious and sad as she observed—

“ There is some transaction,” regarding her husband steadily as she spoke, “ that you keep from me, and which will, I fear, in the end, be our ruin. Is it not so ?”

Sir James replied at once, though the keen perception of his wife discovered that he answered evasively :

“ I told you that I had unfortunately lost a paper that contained words, with my signature

attached, that would, if in the hands of the opposing party, totally upset my rights. That paper, I told you, fell into your father's hands, and thus he obtained his power over me. He allowed himself to be deprived of that paper by George Thornback, and from him William Thornback obtained it's possession. Now do not tantalise me longer, but read those letters ; then we will talk more of this cursed paper."

Lady Tregannon took up one of the voluminous packets she had received from France, saying—

"I will read you this first, though it was written many weeks before the other."

We pass over the first part of the letter, which only related to the state of parties in France, the fall of the Girondists, and the triumph of Robespierre and his faction. We now quote Madame L——'s own words:—

"While things were in this state, Colonel

D'Arblay was ordered, with his regiment of dragoons, to join General Quetoneau in suppressing the insurrection in La Vendée. I intended shortly after to proceed to, and spend some months at his Chateau Bois-Philibert, which I wished Monsieur De L—— to purchase.

“About three weeks after the departure of D'Arblay I was surprised by a letter from him, stating that his wife, whom he supposed to be in India, had actually been taken in an English ship, and carried to Rochefort—that she had written to him, stating that she had an English girl under her charge, one of the wealthiest heiresses in England—that she had passed her off as her daughter, to save her from falling into the power of the authorities, and begged him to allow the deception to remain till she could provide for her safety.

“D'Arblay sent a trusty messenger to Rochefort to enquire into particulars, and take a letter to his wife, requesting her to proceed

at once to the Chateau. He also wrote to my sister, who was there, to receive them for a short time, and to appear as the housekeeper. You see, D'Arblay, whose funds were low, intended to turn this young lady into a source of profit, and get a large sum for her release ; but the intelligence his messenger gained at Rochefort changed his plans a little.

“ It appears that the captured vessel was a yacht, owned and commanded by the very Captain Tregannon you have so often spoken to me about, and in the ship was the young girl's father. D'Arblay told me to find his friend, Monsieur or Captain Thornback, and explain this to him, and tell him to join him at once—that he would get him a captain's commission in his regiment, and he knowing everything about these people, would be able to assist him.

“ I sent for Thornback, who was glad enough to quit Paris, having got into a broil with Legendre and Marat, so he started at once for

La Vendée; and thus I am forced to conclude what may concern you and Sir James, till I receive further intelligence from La Vendée. Now, how long do you think will it be before you and Sir James will be able to return here? Try and manage to get the ten thousand pounds purchase money as soon as you can. You will have a splendid bargain of the estate."

After some few remarks more, concerning the state of Paris, the letter concluded

"What is the date of that letter?" inquired Sir James, anxiously.

"It is dated nearly four weeks previous to the terribly important one I am now going to read you," replied Lady Tregannon.

"Ah, if we had had that letter in time," exclaimed Sir James, bitterly, "I could have crushed this Claude Tregannon's pretensions for ever—but go on. I see I shall have a bold game to play, or else we shall have to fly, beggared, from this cursed country."

“Not beggared, at all events,” returned Lady Tregannon, scornfully. “If you have a grain of sense you can secure twenty or thirty thousand pounds; and that sum, in France, if judiciously laid out, will purchase the condemned estate of some aristocrat; but listen—

“All our schemes are knocked on the head,” continued Lady Tregannon, quoting from the second letter.

After some violent outbreaks of passion, which it is quite unnecessary to trouble our readers with, she proceeded—

“D’Arblay is dead. I can hardly believe this event as I write it. He was killed in a duel by General Marce—the wretch; his neck shall feel the steel of the guillotine—I swear it. He owed his death to this girl—this Demoiselle Fleetwood. Suspecting something wrong, or instigated to do so by Madame D’Arblay, she contrived to escape from the Chateau. She

was pursued by Captain Thornback and D'Arblay's dragoons, overtaken, and fell into his power, when, strange to relate, they encountered a large force of insurgents, and amongst them was this Captain Tregannon, who, it appears, from the account I received, had been released from the prison of Doué, and was actually fighting in the ranks of those rebels, the Vendéans.

“Captain Tregannon, it appears, shot Captain Thornback, and, as I heard, took from him a pocket-book containing most important papers concerning your husband—one in particular.”

A fearful imprecation burst from the lips of Sir James when he heard those words. His cheek grew livid; and his hands, as he clenched them, trembled with passion, as he exclaimed—

“We are ruined—Curse him!—if he reaches England, I am crushed—annihilated.”

“Do not give way to passion, James,” said Lady Tregannon, calmly enough, though her

own cheek was very pale; "hear me to the end."

Sir James ground his teeth till even his wife shuddered. She, however, continued—

"One in particular, which you know Thornback boasted was worth six thousand pounds to him. This intelligence, which I learned from a person on the spot, was confirmed by a few hasty lines from D'Arblay himself, in which he said—'William Thornback was shot and plundered of the important papers he always carried about his person. We have recaptured this fugitive girl, but that imbecile General Marce took it into his head to take her under his protection; however, I will manage him.' These were the last lines I had from him. A fortnight afterwards news reached Paris that Colonel D'Arblay had been killed in a duel by General Marce, and that Thouars had surrendered to the Vendean insurgents. From a private source I also heard that Madame D'Arblay and the English girl

had departed from Thouars for Rochelle, where they were to embark for England. These events overwhelm me ; the purchase of Chateau Bois-Philibert and the estate has not been completed, for, on investigation, it turns out to revert to Madame D'Arblay by a marriage settlement ; she has, however, been denounced as an aristocrat corresponding with England, therefore her property will be confiscated. Now, *ma chere*, I have communicated all the intelligence I could gain of those strange and untoward events. You know best how they will affect you. Take my advice, should you think the papers taken from Captain Thornback will destroy your husband's claims to the properties he holds, raise all the money you can and fly to this country."

There was much more in Madame L—'s letter but not necessary to record.

"Now, James," said Lady Tregannon, laying down the letter, "you know how you are

situated. Claude Tregannon may arrive, or, perhaps, has arrived, therefore, if you consider the document he has thus strangely gained will destroy your title, be energetic, and gather together all you can, and quit this country before it is too late."

"You are right," replied her husband, rousing himself from the despairing gloom that was pressing with an iron hand upon his heart. He had enjoyed years of impunity, but not happiness; for the crime he had committed—the hour, the time, the circumstance—were all before him; and in the lone hours of the night—that terrible period for those stained with crime, to be restless and sleepless on their couches—the scene of Sir Claude Tregannon's last struggle rose like a dream before him, and his piercing shriek of despair, as he swallowed the deadly poison, rung continually in his ear, and oftentimes fired his brain with the taint of madness.

Did James Tregannon rouse himself for the

purpose of repentance? No : he roused himself, and steeled his nerves to commit more crime—if he could—to add to the black catalogue, already filled to overflowing.

The following day, after a long conference with Lady Tregannon, Sir James proceeded to Plymouth, and from thence took the mail to London.

What his projects and schemes were, and what result followed them, will be seen in the sequel.

CHAPTER XV.

THE arrival of the crew of the *Water Witch* was a source of intense gratification to their connections and friends. The two brothers Fleetwood embraced each other, shedding tears of joy at their return after long years of separation. Fanny was the happiest of the happy. All her troubles and misfortunes appeared at an end. She was surrounded by friends and

relations; her father's health wonderfully restored; her uncle looked younger than ever; her lover happy, and full of hope and joy for the future. She had carefully preserved the important papers, and returned them to our hero, who hastened to place them in the hands of Mr. Saunders. They were opened and read in the presence of Sir Charles Treastle, at Mr. Saunders's; Claude Tregannon's attorney, Mr. Vigors, being also present.

The first was the document, the loss of which had occasioned James Tregannon so much misery and vexation.

Our hero was already acquainted with its contents, and many an hour of bitter thought and reflection it had cost him.

It was a sheet of common letter paper, written on both sides. One side contained a letter from the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon to Sir Charles Treastle, which Mr. Saunders read aloud, as follows:—

“Tregannon, May the 8th, 178—.”

“MY DEAR CHARLES,

“This day a terrible misfortune has befallen me—some wretches, most likely gipsies, have stolen my beloved boy, Claude—he was playing on the lawn with his sisters, and was suddenly missed. I have traversed the country in every direction without success, and am ill and distracted in mind. Lose no time in coming here, that we may renew our search together. You can cause enquiries to be made in your vicinity. If stolen by gipsies, they so stain and alter a child that he might be passed over by a stranger without attracting attention. My poor boy met with an accident a few weeks ago, by thrusting his arm through a pane of glass in the green house—it has healed, but will, no doubt, leave a mark for life—a circle round the arm is visible, just below the left elbow. Send trustworthy persons about your vicinity to search amongst the

gipsy tribes, and set out for this as early as you can. I have written this too late to send to-night.

“Ever yours, affectionately,

“HENRY CLAUDE TREGANNON.”

But that which appeared so strange and mysterious was the writing on the other side.

“Miserable old man, my hour of vengeance has arrived—I told you I would inherit Tregannon—and I will—I stole your boasted heir, to rear him to a life of degradation and shame, such as you, in your pride, condemned me to. Tremble, for your last hour is come.

“JAMES TREGANNON.”

As this scroll was read, each person present looked the other in the face. Our hero's

features were greatly flushed, for he was now convinced that his father had been murdered by James Tregannon.

"This is very extraordinary," said Mr. Saunders, laying down the paper; "by this it appears very evident that James Tregannon intended to take the life of Sir Henry. We have evidence that he entered the house that night, no doubt with the intent to commit this crime; but why this writing—and on the back of the late Baronet's own letter?"

"We can but surmise," said Sir Charles Treastle; "I remember, as if it were but yesterday, every object that presented itself when I reached Tregannon—for nothing was touched in the late Baronet's room until the coroner arrived. I remember there was a writing desk on the table, near which sat the Baronet, and there were paper and pens on the desk, as if he had just been writing. It appears to me possible that James Tregannon entered the room whilst he was sleeping, as the

evidence of his own attendant proved, under the influence of a narcotic. This letter of my lamented father-in-law's, intended for me, might have been lying on the desk, the sheet written on, turned with the blank side up, and on this James Tregannon, for what purpose I cannot imagine, wrote those words. At all events, this document clearly proves, my brother-in-law's birth and right to the property; he bears the mark still, and you, Mr. Vigors, have Mr. Treestail's evidence of the accident. Now let us look at the other papers."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Saunders; "this is a document, signed by James Tregannon, agreeing to give George Thornback the sum of five thousand pounds on his taking the child, and going to America."

Opening the other paper, it proved to be an agreement between James Tregannon and William Thornback, engaging to give him the sum of six thousand pounds for a certain document in his possession—the six thousand pounds to

be paid on his gaining possession of the Pentoven property ; they all had dates, signatures, &c.

“ With these documents, and the others, we possess,” said Mr. Saunders, “ we may defy all the crown lawyers in Europe to upset our claims. Now, I think, the first step to be taken is to arrest James Tregannon for the murder of his uncle, Sir Henry Claude Tregannon ; the villain ought to be brought to judgment.”

To this proposition all the party agreed ; and, after much more conversation on the subject, they separated, Mr. Saunders proceeding to take the necessary steps for the arrest of James Tregannon.

Our hero spent the remainder of the day at Mr. Fleetwood's ; and, at a late hour, went back to sleep at the Cornish Arms, where he and Sir Charles had sojourned before his departure for India. As he was about to retire to bed, the waiter said—

"I beg, sir, you will excuse a mistake of the chamber-maid, she put a gentleman who arrived late from Devonshire into your room, and he was fast asleep before she discovered her error. However, she has removed your things into the next chamber, and hopes you will pardon the blunder."

"It is of no consequence whatever," said Claude, "in what room I sleep—I am not very particular."

Taking the candle, he proceeded along the gallery, and entered No. 32, his former room being No. 31, and in a very few minutes was in bed and asleep.

It had just struck two o'clock in the morning, and a profound stillness reigned throughout the hotel, even Mr. Boots had retired for an hour's repose. In No. 45, was a gentleman who arrived the night before, and who gave his name to the waiter as Mr. Jenkins, from South Wales, requesting that any letters for that name should be kept for him. From the

period of his arrival he had not stirred out of his room, complaining of having a cold. He had a large handkerchief wrapped round his neck and over his mouth; his head was very grey, though he appeared a tall, strong, hale man; he had neither whiskers or beard. Two letters came for him the day following his arrival, and about three or four o'clock in the afternoon he walked up and down the corridor, and seeing the chamber-maid busy at her occupations, he asked her several unimportant questions, and, in course of conversation, said—

“That is a very handsome young man who passed along the corridor a short time since. I think I know his face—a Cornish gentleman, I believe?”

“Oh, you mean No. 31. Yes, sir, he is a very handsome young man, his name is Tregannon.”

“Ah, I thought so,” said the stranger. “I have seen him in Cornwall.

And he passed on to his room. These remarks were remembered afterwards, but not thought of at the time.

The occupier of No. 45, though he passed himself off as a Mr. Jenkins, of Swansea, South Wales, was no other than James Tregannon. On reaching London, he had proceeded to his attorney's, Mr. Fleeceall, and there learned that Claude had arrived the day before. He then made an attempt to get the ten thousand pounds lodged in the bank, by Messrs. Trubill, and Co., as security for paying costs of suit, &c. His attorney, however, was much too clever a man of business to trust a client of so slippery a nature as the false baronet. Baffled, furious, and driven to extremities, knowing that he would be utterly ruined, and his life in danger if he awaited the opening of the suit, he conceived, and

determined to carry it into effect, a scheme of vengeance against him, to whom he attributed, in his wild and perverted brain, all the misfortunes that had befallen him.

At two o'clock in the morning, when all the inmates of the "Cornish Arms," had retired to rest, Sir James Tregannon was seated at a table, on which was a lighted candle, a brace of pistols, and a poniard of foreign make, his face, fearfully pale, his dark eyes emitting a wild and sinister glance, his lank grey hair parting his expansive forehead, his teeth firmly set, and his countenance exhibiting all those fearful contortions which are produced by a mind ill at ease. He had the appearance of a maniac, and he had, in fact, worked himself into a state of feverish insanity ; still all his actions were systematically carried out.

Rising from his seat, he put the pistols into his pocket, and the poniard in his breast, and took from a portmanteau a small dark lantern, which he lighted, and blew out his candle,

after placing a letter, folded and sealed, and directed to Lady Tregannon, in his pocket. Opening his door cautiously, he stepped out into the corridor, and for an instant stood listening, but all was still. He then proceeded, now and then holding his small round light up at the numbers over the doors. At last he stopped before No. 31. He trembled from head to foot, his heart beat audibly, while the sound of his teeth, grating each other, sounded strangely in the stillness that prevailed around. Mastering his emotion, he looked at the lock of the door, the key was on the outside. Placing his hand on the lock, he opened the door without the slightest noise, and entered the room, his dark lantern was turned so that no light was thrown over any of the objects in the chamber; he stood thus for a minute, during which he could hear the hard breathings of the unconscious sleeper.

Approaching the bed, the poniard in one hand, the lantern in the other, he gently

opened a small portion of the slide, so that a faint light fell upon the form of the sleeper, who was lying with his back towards the intruder. Cautiously he stepped close up, and so terrible were his emotions that to keep his teeth from grinding, he bit through his under lip till the blood flowed over his chin.

The collar of the sleeping man was open, and his neck bare ; grasping his dagger, James Tregannon aimed one terrible blow at his victim.

With a wild and fearful shriek, that rang through the house, the wounded man started up and turned round, the light fell upon the ghastly face just as the frenzied villain raised his weapon to strike again, but with a fearful imprecation, he saw that he had mistaken his victim ; the face was that of a man of his own age, perhaps older.

Driven to madness by this discovery, the murderer lost all presence of mind. There was a loud noise in the corridor ; instead of

shutting his lantern, he opened the slide, and drawing a pistol from his pocket, he turned, with a terrible oath, to the door; it was burst open, and several persons were running along the corridor, but he who first entered was Claude Tregannon, in his dressing-gown.

The murderer knew him at a glance, and with a yell of triumph he fired his pistol within a yard of him. This time the villain's aim was true, Claude Tregannon received the ball in his breast, staggered forward to seize the wretch, though he did not know him, and then fell senseless on the floor.

With an exulting laugh, James Tregannon, as several persons, with one or two waiters, and the night porter, all half dressed, rushed into the room, placed the remaining pistol in his mouth and pulled the trigger, and before a hand could touch him, he fell dead upon the floor.

For several moments the appalling scene held the spectators spell-bound. The reports

of the pistols had roused every inmate of that part of the house, and, fortunately, amongst the number, a skilful surgeon from Exeter who instantly recovered his nerve, and kneeling down by Claude, and ordering a light to be held to him, he examined the body, and saw at once that he had received a pistol ball in the left breast.

“Lift him up—lift him up, carefully,” said the surgeon, “he is not dead. That wretch, however, is dead,” pointing to James Tregannon, and ordering the porter to run for another surgeon.

He then looked at the unfortunate gentleman in the bed, he was alive, and although bleeding profusely, his wound was not very serious.

After a careful examination of the wound in Claud’s breast, the surgeon found where the ball was lodged, and, with much satisfaction, he declared that it could be easily extracted,

and that, as well as he could judge, just then, the ball had not touched any vital part.

We will not weary our readers with surgical details, or relate the confusion and dismay that reigned throughout the hotel during the remainder of that night.

The unfortunate gentleman who was so near losing his life, through the chamber-maid's mistake, remained several weeks under medical treatment.

It was not till after the arrival of Sir Charles Treastle, in a state of mind not to be described, that the supposed Mr. Jenkins's body was discovered to be that of James Tre-gannon.

Sir Charles Treastle, with the surgeon's consent, had his brother-in-law conveyed in a hand litter to his own mansion, where every attention and care that love and devotion could perform was bestowed upon him. The difficulty was to break the intelligence to Fanny

Fleetwood. But Mary, though suffering acutely herself, undertook the painful task, trusting that the opinion of the most eminent surgeon of the day, Sir ——, who was at once summoned to attend on Claud Tregannon, and who had declared the wound not mortal, would ease her mind.

The first glance into the beautiful face of Mary Tregannon, though she did all she could to look composed, told a tale to Fanny that caused the blood to desert her cheeks; with an exclamation of great anguish she threw her arms round Mary's neck, pronouncing but the one word—Claude.

Mary, with the tears streaming from her eyes, pressed the devoted girl to her heart, saying—

“There is no danger, on my honour—the surgeon assured us there is no danger whatever of life.”

These few words, seemingly so abrupt, so mystified, were the very best Mary could have used. They told the tale that Claude had in-

curred, in some way, the peril of death, and that though ill, his life was yet preserved.

Mary felt Fanny's whole frame tremble and quiver, but the next moment, with a heavy sigh, she removed her arms from Mary's neck, and kissing her fondly, said—

“I ought to bless God, who has given me such a sister to love as you, dear Mary; I am calm now; let me hear what it is that has happened to my poor Claude?” and the tears streamed from her eyes, and her voice trembled with intense emotion; “you must take me to him; for my heart and soul are his. God forgive me, and with him I either live or die.”

Mary led her to a seat, and as gently and calmly as she could told all she knew; for as yet the affair was mystified. Fanny heard her to the end without uttering a word; her cheek was fearfully pale; but rising, she said, in a clear, firm voice—

“I must break this intelligence to my dear

father ; for he already loves Claude as his own child, and the shock will be too great for him, if care be not taken. I will then accompany you home, Mary, and you will not refuse me a share of your couch till Claude recovers."

Her lips quivered as she said the last words ; for though hope was in her heart, she feared her lover was in terrible peril of life.

From joy to sorrow, alas ! in this world of ours, how short is often the transition ; but so God has ordained it, and so it will be to the end.

We pass over three weeks ; for why dwell upon human suffering. At the expiration of that time Claude Tregannon sat on a couch between his sister Mary and Fanny Fleetwood, weak and languid, it is true, but still rapidly recovering the nearly fatal wound he had received.

Much had occurred during those three weeks—the Crown lawyers had had a private consul-

tation with those engaged on the part of Claude, and had carefully gone over the papers relative to the pending suit, and seeing that not the slightest doubt existed of Claude's being the rightful heir to the title and estates, abandoned the claim on the part of the Crown.

The body of James Tregannon had been privately buried, and no suit in court taking place, much that would have been extremely painful to the family of Tregannon was spared. Sir Henry Claude Tregannon desired that the wife of his implacable foe should be handsomely provided for; but she had acted for herself. Having disposed of all her jewellery, and got possession of about five thousand pounds in the Truro bank, she quitted Tregannon, and proceeded through Holland into France. Of her after fate nothing was heard.

Six months after these events, Fanny Fleetwood, surrounded by a circle of loving relatives and friends, became Lady Tregannon, a d

shortly after proceeded to take up her residence at Tregannon Mansion. Madame D'Arblay, upon whom Mr. Fleetwood settled a handsome annuity, going with her.

As to Tom Starling, he was made independent for life ; but his great pride was having been made Sir Claude Tregannon's coxwain, when he used his yacht the *Water Witch*, and finding that his sweetheart had remained faithful to him in his absence, he made her Mrs. Starling, and settled down on the Tregannon estate in a very neat and pretty cottage Sir Claude had built purposely for him.

As to the Pentoven estate, though Sir Claude Treastle did all he could to persuade his brother-in-law to accept a share of the profits of the mines, he could not be made to listen to any such proposals, he then at once executed a deed, bestowing upon Sir Charles and his heirs the property for ever.

The marriage of Mary Tregannon was delayed a few months, owing to the Honourable

Frederick Delaware having proceeded to the Court of Vienna on a diplomatic mission. On his return, Tregannon House and its vicinity became a scene of great rejoicing upon Mary's becoming the Honourable Mrs. Delaware.

The two brothers Fleetwood closed their mercantile career as soon as they possibly could, and purchased a beautiful property, within a couple of miles of Tregannon Park, where they, indeed, passed nearly all their time.

If our hero and heroine went through many trials in their early years, they were amply and richly repaid by the felicity that crowned the remainder of their lives, living to see a numerous progeny grow up about them — themselves loved and respected by all classes in the county and ever ready to lend a helping hand to the virtuous and needy.

Mr. Treestrail was made superintendent of the entire property belonging to Sir Claude Tregannon, and resided chiefly at Grange

House, where also Sir Claude and Lady Tregannon spent a month or two every summer, visiting Lyme Regis in their yacht the Water Witch.

The faithful Hannah, though made perfectly independent, would not leave her mistress, by whom she was looked upon more as a friend than a dependent.

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